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THE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES;

WITH

Annotations

NOTES,

CHIEFLY EXPLANATORY;

DESIGNED FOR TEACHERS IN

SABBATH SCHOOLS AND BIBLE CLASSES,

AND AS

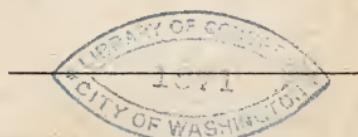
AN AID TO FAMILY INSTRUCTION.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS volume is designed to be a companion to my Notes on the Gospels, and has been conducted on the same general principles with that work. It has, however, been my aim to make this work independent of that, wholly avoiding such references to it as might embarrass a reader, or as would leave him, if not possessed of that work, without the information which any given passage might require. To prevent perplexity, I have also, for the most part, quoted such other passages of Scripture as were required, instead of simply referring to them.

The reader will perceive that I have sometimes enriched my pages, not only with the sentiments, but also with the language, of other writers. When I found, in standard authors, thoughts and expressions just such as I should have been glad to have myself originated, or as appeared specially appropriate, it seemed to me I could not better consult for the benefit of my readers, than by transferring them to my pages. The sacred literature of past ages furnishes some of the brightest and most useful materials for Christian writers of the present age.

In writing on a book so eminently historical as the Acts of the Apostles, it is desirable to attain accuracy as to dates. This, however, has not yet been accomplished by all the efforts which learned men have directed to it. A difference of two or three, sometimes of more, years, exists in the calculations of different writers, without, however, in the least degree affecting the authority of the book, or impairing its practical value. Without pretending to minute accuracy, the dates which are here inserted in the upper margin of the pages may be considered the more probable ones. In the first Appendix, at the end of the volume, the opinions of several chronologers are given, in regard to the events of the apostle Paul's life.

The map which is prefixed to this volume is copied from Weiland's Bible Atlas, the German names being here expressed by the corre-

sponding English ones. The smallness of the scale on which it is constructed, makes it convenient for illustrating all the travels and voyages of the apostle Paul, which are minutely detailed in the Acts. At the same time, it will be found useful in the study of chapters preceding the one, in which the sacred writer commences his account of the apostle's travels.

As so many proper names, both of persons and places, occur in this book, I have thought it would be an acceptable service to the reader to give, in an Appendix at the close of the volume, the pronunciation of such as might occasion difficulty.

The titles, or contents, of chapters are copied from the American Bible Society's edition.

With the hope that this product of many laborious, yet pleasant, hours, will be useful to the cause of religion, I commend it to the Christian public, and to the adorable Saviour, "whose I am, and whom I serve."

H. J. RIPLEY.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE title of this book, *Acts of the Apostles*, sufficiently indicates its character, and the design of its author. It is a comprehensive account of transactions in which the apostles and other early preachers were engaged, subsequently to the death of Jesus, for defending and promoting the Christian religion. The writer confines himself, however, mostly to the labors of Peter and Paul, devoting by far the larger part of the book to the latter apostle.

From the earliest times of Christianity, Luke has been acknowledged the author of this book. The writer's allusion (Acts 1:1) to his former work, the *Gospel according to Luke*, and the similarity between the two in respect to style, fully agree with the concurrent belief of ancient and of modern times in regard to its author. His *Gospel* he denominates his first, or former, treatise; the *Acts* we may consider a second treatise, carrying forward the Christian history to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. In some parts of the book, Luke writes as one personally acquainted with the events, and engaged in them. His knowledge of the other events which he relates, could be easily obtained from the apostle Paul, with whom he was in intimate familiarity, and from other sources of original information. Luke was a diligent investigator of facts pertaining to the Saviour and his religion. See Luke 1:1—4.

This book has a special value, as showing the early progress of the gospel amid both favorable and unfavorable circumstances, the manner in which inspired men sought to spread the Christian religion both among heathens and Jews, and the arrangements which were made in those early times, by the Saviour's authorized servants, for sustaining the gospel where it was introduced, and for conducting the affairs of churches. Though sufficient information is not given us on these points to gratify curiosity, yet enough is furnished to show us the primitive model, and thus to give us the pattern which we should endeavor to imitate.

Two general divisions may be made of this book. The first comprises an account of the leading events from the ascension of Christ to the apostle Paul's commencing his apostolical journeys. This part includes the first twelve chapters, and is mainly occupied with events that occurred in Palestine or its vicinity. It relates the history of the church in Jerusalem; the martyrdom of Stephen, with the persecution that immediately followed, and the dispersion of the Christians, through Judea and Samaria, and beyond Palestine; the conversion of Saul; the introduction of the gospel among the Gentiles; the martyrdom of the apostle James, and the rescue of Peter from the violent death which Herod the king had designed. The second division commences with the thirteenth chapter, and relates the travels and labors of Paul and his associates for the spread of the gospel in Asia Minor and in Europe, and for promoting the purity and prosperity of the churches.

The whole book covers the space of time from the year of our Lord 33 to about 65.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

1 Christ, preparing his apostles to the beholding of his ascension, gathereth them together into the mount Olivet, commandeth them to expect in Jerusalem the sending down of the Holy Ghost, promiseth after few days to send it; by virtue whereof they should be witnesses unto him, even to the utmost parts of the earth. 9 After his ascension, they are warned by two angels to depart, and to set their minds upon his

CHAPTER I.

1. *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus.* Luke, the author of this book, here alludes to the Gospel previously composed by him and dedicated to Theophilus. See Luke 1: 1—4. To the same distinguished friend he dedicates, in like manner, the history, on which we are now entering, of the labors of the apostles after the ascension of Christ. || *Of all that Jesus began to do and to teach;* or, as we may say, of what Jesus *undertook* to do and to teach. The idea is the same as if the writer had said, *of what Jesus did and taught;* for what he *began* he also completed. When the writer says he had given an account of *all* that Jesus did and taught, he must be understood as speaking in a familiar manner, and as meaning, not that he had related every particular that Jesus did and taught (for this would not be possible in so brief a compass as his Gospel; see also John 21: 25), but that he had related the chief, or most important things, and specially those which were necessary to his design of giving a complete account of the life of Jesus, an account sufficiently full for proving him to be the Messiah, and for showing the nature of his doctrines. He had omitted noth-

second coming. 12 They accordingly return, and, giving themselves to prayer, choose Matthias apostle in the place of Judas.

THE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given com-

ing which would be necessary to gain a correct view of the life and character of Jesus.

2. *Until the day in which he was taken up;* the day when he was received up into heaven, the day of his ascension. Compare v. 11. Luke, in the first two chapters of his Gospel, gave a brief account of the birth and childhood of Jesus. From the third chapter to the end, his Gospel related what Jesus did and taught from his entrance on his public work to his ascension. Thus Luke had given a complete view of Jesus' life on earth. Compare Luke 3: 21. 24: 51. || *After that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments.* Jesus is represented in the Bible as having been abundantly furnished with spiritual influences, or as acting by the special aid of the Holy Spirit. Hence he is said, in 10: 38, to have been anointed with the Holy Spirit, and, in Luke 4: 1, to have been full of the Holy Spirit; and, in John 3: 34, it is said, the Father giveth not the Spirit *by measure*, that is, in any limited degree, to him. Compare Is. 11: 2. 61: 1. It was under this divine impulse that he instructed and commissioned his apostles. *The giving of commandments* to the apostles, here mentioned by the sacred writer, does not refer to any particu-

mandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 To whom also he showed

lar injunctions, but to the instructions and commands which he had given them, as his apostles, appointed to spread the gospel and establish his church in the world. || *The apostles whom he had chosen.* For the names of the twelve apostles, see Luke 6:13—16. Matt. 10:2—4

3. *To whom also he showed himself alive;* to whom he presented himself alive, and, by appearing before them, gave them the proper evidence that he was indeed alive. || *After his passion.* The word *passion* here means *suffering*, and refers to our Lord's having suffered death. || *By many infallible proofs.* Compare John 20:30. Jesus, after his resurrection, did many things, in the presence of his disciples, which proved him, beyond question, to be the very same person that had before been with them, and had been crucified and buried. See the accounts in the 20th and 21st chapters of John's Gospel, and in the 24th chapter of Luke's. Besides what he did and said after his resurrection, as showing him to be the same person, and to be pursuing the same object as before, his bodily presence was itself enough to produce conviction. For the apostles could not be deceived in regard to the person of Jesus. They had had an intimate and confiding acquaintance with him, and were familiar with his voice and looks. And now, after having been violently torn from them, put to death, and buried, he was again among them. He showed himself repeatedly to them, on various occasions, sometimes when only two or three were present, and sometimes when all the apostles were together. He conversed familiarly with them, and ate with them: and all this during forty days. How is it possible, if the person thus with them were not Jesus of Nazareth,—the identical person who had before been with them,—that not one of them

himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking

should have known him to be a different person? There was no room for mistake. The apostles had "many infallible proofs" that Jesus did indeed present himself before them alive after his death. It is worthy of special remark, that the apostles themselves were slow of belief in regard to his resurrection. They were not credulous men, believing without satisfactory evidence. But the evidence was so convincing, that even the most incredulous among them was compelled to acknowledge it; and, in the strength of his conviction and the fervor of his affection, he could not refrain from exclaiming, "My Lord and my God." See John 20:24—28. || *Being seen of them forty days.* Compare 13:31. Jesus did not allow himself to be seen by the public indiscriminately after his resurrection, but appeared only to his true followers. It was important that he should be seen by them, so that they might be witnesses of his resurrection, and that he might still further instruct and encourage them, and thus prepare them for their work of vindicating his cause and spreading the gospel. Compare 10:40, 41. We are not informed that Jesus remained perpetually, during these forty days, with the disciples. Occasionally, at least, and perhaps frequently, for the space of forty days, he appeared to them, and staid a longer or a shorter time, as his purposes required. While he was with them, however, he conducted in all ordinary respects as he had done before his death. He ate and drank with them. See 10:41. Where Jesus was between the intervals when he appeared to his disciples, we know not. He had all power in heaven and on earth, and there was no lack of ability to appear or to disappear, to be in one place or in another, just as he chose. In all probability, his appearances were at irregular intervals, and, for the most part, without

of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God :

4 And being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from

previous notice. Compare John 20 : 19, 26. 21 : 1—14. || *Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* By the kingdom of God is here meant the religion of Christ. This religion is called the kingdom, or, more properly, the reign, of God, because it establishes in men's hearts those just and righteous principles which accord with God's will, and thus fits them for the happiness which God has appointed for his true subjects. All who heartily embrace this religion choose God for their King, and consider themselves as his subjects. The Messiah's dispensation is, therefore, eminently the period of God's reigning among men. Compare Matt. 3 : 2. The apostles, who were to be their Lord's ambassadors and representatives, and the leaders of his people, needed further instruction ; and, as it was his purpose to defer their becoming fully qualified for their work, by the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, until the day of Pentecost (2 : 1—4), he gave them, during the intervening time, instructions and encouragements adapted to their circumstances and prospects.

4. *Being assembled together with them.* As this was the Saviour's last interview with the disciples on earth (see v. 9), it was held, at least the latter part of it, on mount Olivet. Compare v. 12. From Luke 24 : 50, we learn that Jesus led out the disciples as far as to Bethany (that is, probably, to the boundaries of Bethany, not into the village itself), and took his final leave of them. Bethany was on the eastern side of Olivet, fifteen furlongs, or nearly two miles, from Jerusalem. John 11 : 18. It would seem that this interview was held partly in Jerusalem, and partly during the walk from Jerusalem to the spot of ascension. || *Commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem* ; that they should not, for

Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said he*, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized

the present, leave Jerusalem. This is the same command as is recorded in Luke 24 : 49, "Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." It was the design of God to bestow on them special qualifications for their holy and arduous work. || *Wait for the promise of the Father.* God the Father had promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which the apostles of Jesus should be fully and finally qualified for their office. See John 15 : 26, 27. 16 : 13. Compare Luke 24 : 49. For the fulfilment of this promise, they were to wait in Jerusalem. || *Ye have heard of me.* In our Lord's conversation with the disciples shortly before he was betrayed, he had assured them (John 15 : 26, 27. 16 : 13) that the Holy Spirit would be imparted for completing their qualification to be his apostles.

5. *For John, &c. ; that is, John the Baptist.* Compare Matt. 3 : 11. || *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.* The word *baptize* primarily signifies to *immerse*. And as a person who has been immersed in water has received it most copiously, this word is well used to express the idea of *great abundance* or *plentifulness*. Compare Matt. 20 : 22, 23, where the words *baptize* and *baptism* evidently convey the idea of *overwhelm* and *overwhelming*. *To be baptized with the Holy Spirit*, then, means *to receive the influences of the Holy Spirit in great abundance*. The apostles were to be most plenteously endued with divine influence. The copious influences of the Spirit would qualify them for their office as apostles, by correcting all their erroneous views, and leading them into all Christian truth, by greatly promoting their piety and zeal, and by endowing them with miraculous powers. Thus they would be made fit guides of men in religion. || *Not many days*

with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him,

hence. The promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, as is related in the second chapter of the Acts. The Pentecost occurred fifty days from the passover, which was the time when our Lord was crucified; and as his ascension occurred forty days (v. 3) after his resurrection, the promised effusion of the Holy Spirit took place about ten days from the time of this declaration.

6. *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him.* The same interview is here referred to, as is spoken of in the two preceding verses; and the original might be more literally rendered, *Those who had come together asked of him.* || *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* The word *Israel* here means the *Jewish nation*. In common with other Jews, the disciples appear, before their Lord's crucifixion, to have cherished the expectation that the Messiah would establish an earthly reign of great dignity and glory. Compare Matt. 20: 21. After his resurrection, similar views appear to have been cherished by them for a time; and it was in consequence of this expectation, that the question in this verse was proposed to our Lord. The disciples wished to know whether the time was now come in which he would assume royal power, and restore to the nation its former prosperity, giving it dominion, under his auspices, over all the nations of the earth. With this earthly view of the Messiah's reign, there was, doubtless, associated in their minds a partial view of its spiritual nature, as designed to establish *true religion*, and to bring over the nations to that religion. Their views of religion had also undergone a great change; and they were far superior to their countrymen in valuable religious knowledge. They had not been connected so long with Jesus wholly in vain; nor were his

saying, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

7 And he said unto them, It is

instructions without good effects on their minds, as well as hearts. Still, they were not yet wholly free from the erroneous impressions which their early education had made.

7. *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, &c.* Without aiming directly to remove their misapprehensions, and without answering their inquiry, Jesus presented to the disciples the thought, that it was properly no part of their concern to know the precise time, or the appointed opportunity, for a signal manifestation of the Messiah's authority. God had seen fit to reserve to himself such knowledge. It was their duty patiently to wait the developments of divine Providence, and to hold themselves ready to receive the extraordinary endowments which the Spirit would bestow. Events were just at hand, the Saviour knew, which would correct all the misconceptions of the disciples; and he confidently trusted, in respect to their attaining correct views, to the efficacy of the Spirit's influences, which were soon to be imparted. Their views would then be corrected and enlarged. Light would beam on their minds, and they would discover the utter needlessness of some inquiries which were now deeply interesting to them.

It appears from the ninth verse of this chapter, that, at the close of the interview during which this conversation occurred, our Lord's ascension took place. The time when a very important manifestation of the Messiahship of Jesus was to be made, was only ten days distant. Forty days were already passed since his resurrection; and ten more would introduce the Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit would be shed forth.

REFLECTION. The remark of our Saviour to his inquisitive disciples conveys a salutary lesson to us all. When we feel desirous to pry into

not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come

the counsels of God respecting the future, and to inquire at what time the millennial glory of the church will be ushered in, or when the end of the world will come, or the day of judgment break upon the world, let us check such unprofitable inquiries by remembering, that it is not for us to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath established by his own authority, and kept concealed in his own mind. Soldiers in active service are not expected to be inquiring into the times and seasons, when their general's plans are to be executed. Be it, rather, our solicitude to be always ready for our personal summons to the bar of God, and to be always living in such a manner that we shall contribute to the preparation of others, as well as of ourselves, to give up the final account with joy.

8. *Ye shall receive power; ye shall receive all needed ability for the office to which ye are called.* Reference is had, as appears by the next clause, to the supernatural ability with which the apostles were to be endowed by the Holy Spirit. They would need special illumination and the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, so as to apprehend and explain the principles of the Messiah's religion, and to give miraculous evidence that the cause of Jesus enjoyed divine approval and assistance. || *After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; or, the Holy Spirit being come on you.* It was by the Holy Spirit's agency that the apostles were to be fully prepared for their office. Thus our Lord here expressed plainly what he had called, in the fourth verse, *the promise of the Father.* || *In Jerusalem and in all Judea;* in the metropolis of the nation, and through all the country of the Jews. || *In Samaria.* This was the central portion of Palestine; but its inhabitants were not acknowl-

upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

edged as Jews. Between them, indeed, and the Jews, there existed deep-seated hostility. See John 4:9. In our Lord's first commission to his apostles, he forbade them to "enter into any city of the Samaritans" (Matt. 10:5); for the time of his full manifestation as the Messiah and Saviour was not then arrived; and during his lifetime he was specially sent to "the house of Israel." Matt. 15:24. He did, indeed, himself visit Sychar, a city of the Samaritans, and spent two days there. John 4:5, 43. But this was an exception to his ordinary practice. Now, however, that he was about ascending to heaven, and that the gospel was to be spread every where, the Samaritans, as well as the Jews, were to be blessed with it. And on account of the unfriendly feeling between the Jews and the Samaritans, a special direction was needed by the apostles concerning Samaria. Without this, some of them might have been in danger of cherishing the same spirit which was felt by James and John, when they said, in reference to a village of the Samaritans, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down out of heaven and consume them, as Elias did?" See Luke 9:51-56. In the 8th chapter of Acts, vs. 9-25, we have an account of the gospel's being extensively preached among the Samaritans. || *Unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Still more widely were they directed to make known the Lord Jesus, as the appointed Saviour. Beyond the limits of Palestine, even to the ends of the earth, were they to spread the gospel. The language of the Saviour on this occasion is in interesting accordance with the language of the second psalm, v. 8, "I shall give thee the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Throughout the known world, wherever they could find, or make, an op-

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up

portunity, they were to bear their testimony respecting Jesus. The providence and the Spirit of God, accordingly, so directed them, that, in a few years after the Saviour's ascension, the gospel was extensively proclaimed through the three quarters of the world then known.

9. *He was taken up; into heaven.* Compare Luke 24:51. || *And a cloud received him, &c.* He became enveloped and overshadowed, doubtless, by "a bright cloud," like that which appeared at the transfiguration of Jesus, as related in Matt. 17:5.

The forty days during which Jesus made communications to his disciples, were peculiarly important in preparing them for the copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, by which they became fully qualified for their work of bearing testimony for their Lord.

10. *Two men; angels in human form.* Angels frequently appeared in such a manner. See Matt. 23:2. Luke 24:4. || *In white apparel.* Angels appearing in human form, on other occasions, assumed such apparel. See Matt. 28:3. John 20:12.

11. *Ye men of Galilee.* The apostles and the Christian company, generally, belonged to Galilee, the northern part of Palestine. Compare 2:7. Matt. 26:73. || *Shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Jesus himself foretold, in Matt. 26:64, that he should hereafter come "in the clouds of heaven." And in Rev. 1:7, we read, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." He departed into heaven in a truly glorious manner: in due time he will appear again in his glory (Matt. 25:31) to judge the world.

into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13 And when they were come

REMARK. In the language of Doddridge, "let us, with the apostles, look up after an ascending Saviour, and send our wishes and our souls to heaven, where he now is, and where he must remain till that important day in which he shall descend to the final judgment. In the mean time, may his cause and service be ever dear to us! And while he is attending to our concerns in the world above, may we, with grateful and joyful alacrity, pursue that which he graciously condescends to own as his interest here upon earth!"

12. *The mount called Olivet; the same as is elsewhere called "the mount of Olives."* Matt. 21:1. 24:3. It was a high ridge, east of Jerusalem and parallel to the city. It was formerly planted with olive-trees. From this mount Jesus ascended to heaven. Compare the note on v. 4. || *Which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.* A sabbath day's journey among the Jews, was about a mile. The expression here used is not, however, to be so strictly understood as to mean a definite number of paces, neither more nor less; but, a short distance, such as, according to Jewish custom, it was not considered wrong, to go on the sabbath to attend worship at a synagogue. Different parts of mount Olivet were, of course, more or less distant from Jerusalem. On one side, the foot of the mountain was but five furlongs distant; while Bethany, which lay on the opposite side, was fifteen furlongs. See John 11:18.

13. *When they were come in; that is, into the city.* || *An upper room, where abode both Peter and James, &c.; an upper room of the house*

in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of*

where Peter and the other apostles usually remained. Probably the idea is, not that they made this house their home, but that they habitually resorted to it, and were generally there. They would naturally wish to be frequently together, and to be often occupied in social prayer. Jewish houses were furnished with a large upper room (Mark 14: 15), devoted to conversation with friends, to prayer and meditation. At a later date, "the early Christians were accustomed to assemble in some convenient upper room, set apart for the purpose." Such rooms were generally the most capacious, and in the highest part of the building. It may be interesting to observe, — though the observation is of little importance, — that early ecclesiastical tradition represents the room here spoken of as the very one in which our Lord celebrated the last passover, and instituted the Lord's supper, and in which the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost. || *Peter, &c.* For a similar list of the apostles' names, see Matt. 10: 2—4. Luke 6: 14—16. || *James, the son of Alpheus.* This is James the Less, so called to distinguish him from the other James, who was brother of John and son of Zebedee. *Alpheus* is believed to be the same as Cleophas, mentioned, in John 19: 25, as husband of Mary, who was sister to our Lord's mother. Compare Mark 15: 40, where Mary is called the mother of James the Less. This James, therefore, and his brother Judas, or Jude, were own cousins to Jesus. || *Simon Zelotes.* Compare Luke 6: 15. In Matt. 10: 4, instead of the appellation *Zelotes*, we find *Canaanite*, or, as the word ought to be spelled, *Cananite*. These two words are the same in meaning, but are derived from two different languages; the former being a Greek word, and the latter a Hebrew one. In the

Alpheus, and Simon *Zelotes*, and Judas *the brother of James.*

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary

age of Christ and the apostles, there was, among the Jews, an extensive association of private individuals, who undertook to maintain the purity of the national religion by inflicting punishment, without the form of a trial, on all Jews who should violate their sacred institutions. They declared themselves impelled by a more than human zeal. The word *Zelotes* (zealot) designates a member of this association; and Simon was probably once connected with it. The word *Cananite*, also, traced to its Hebrew origin, signifies *a zealot.* || *Judas;* also called (see Matt. 10: 3) *Lebbeus* and *Thaddeus.* || *Brother of James;* that is, of James the Less, son of Alpheus. Compare the Epistle of Jude, 1st verse.

14. *With the women;* the women, who, as Matthew says (27: 55), "followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him." Compare also Luke 8: 2, 3. These devout women associated themselves with the apostles, being of a kindred spirit, fervent friends of Jesus, and confidently expecting the fulfilment of his promises. The presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus, doubtless added fuel to the flame of their piety, as well as gave them opportunities for sympathizing with her. || *Mary, the mother of Jesus.* "This is the last time," says Scott, "in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned in Scripture: and it is in a very cursory manner, as one of the company who joined in prayer, but without any peculiar distinction, or the least appearance of her exercising authority over, or even of giving counsel to, the apostles." || *His brethren.* The original word, translated *brethren*, was applied, among the Jews, to near relatives, as well as to own brothers; so that it cannot be decided whether the persons here spoken of were our Lord's brothers, or only his near relatives. The language in Matt. 1: 25, and 12: 46,

the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names

agrees well with the belief that he had brothers. It appears from John 7: 5, that these persons did not at first acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah. But at the time of which Luke is here speaking, their doubts were overcome, and they had yielded to the evidence of his being the Saviour.

How appropriately was this company of apostles and Christians occupied! Expecting some signal manifestation of their Lord's power and grace, which would qualify them to promote his cause, they gave themselves to prayer. They waited for the fulfilment of their Lord's promise. They waited, however, not in idleness, but in earnest supplication. They waited *on* him, as well as *for* him. "Never have we more reason to expect the communication of the Holy Spirit of God to us, than when we are employing our time in devotion and in Christian converse, so far as Providence affords us leisure from our secular affairs."

15. *Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples.* Peter appears to have been a leader among the apostles. Compare 2: 14. 3: 12. 4: 8. 5: 3. His love to his Lord, whom he had denied, was revived and confirmed; and the natural fervor of his soul again prompted him to take a forward part in the transactions, in which he was interested. || *The names;* that is, the persons. || *A hundred and twenty.* It is not said, that the whole number of disciples was a hundred and twenty; but such was the number *now together* in Jerusalem. There were others scattered through the country, who were in heart disciples of Jesus, but whose occupation and circumstances did not allow of their being in Jerusalem. Compare 1 Cor. 15: 6, where mention is made of five hundred disciples to whom Jesus appeared at one time after his resurrection. Many, doubtless, who

together were about a hundred and twenty,)

16 *Men and brethren,* this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the

had professed to be his disciples, had forsaken his cause since the fury of the Jewish rulers had prevailed against him. Others, too, had been thrown into perplexity; and, to human view, were on the point of wholly abandoning his cause. Such of these as had heard of the Saviour's resurrection had, doubtless, received a confirmation of their faith and hope. Thus there were scattered over the land not a few who would show themselves, on a suitable occasion, the steadfast followers of Jesus.

16. *Men and brethren.* The word *and*, it will be perceived by its being printed in Italics, was supplied by our translators. The form of expression in the original is simply equivalent to our term *brethren*, the word *men* being placed before it as indicative of respect. Such, too, was the manner of public address among the Greeks on occasions of importance, and when the speaker felt the respect which was due to the assembly. || *This scripture;* namely, that which the apostle cites in the twentieth verse. || *Must needs have been fulfilled.* This does not mean that Judas, or any person concerned in apprehending and crucifying the Saviour, was compelled to act thus against his will. The language merely affirms the certainty that the scripture would be fulfilled. Inspired prophets had foretold that the Messiah would be violently put to death. This event, therefore, was to take place. The scripture cannot be broken (John 10: 35); and whatever it had declared respecting this event in general, or respecting the doom of any particular man who should contribute to it, must be fulfilled. Yet we know that every one who was concerned in the betrayal and death of Jesus acted according to his own will, and consequently contracted guilt. Compare 2: 23.

|| *Which the Holy Ghost by the mouth*

mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with

of David spake before concerning Judas. The language of David, which the apostle was about to produce, declared the sad doom which would certainly overtake his opposers. On several occasions, there were men who took a very active part in persecuting him, and who, he declared, would receive from God a signal overthrow. But the language which David had used in thus denouncing the judgments of God against his unrighteous adversaries, had been most eminently fulfilled in the case of Judas, who had become so distinguished an adversary of Jesus, and had so directly and so treacherously contributed to his coming into the power of his enemies. So remarkably had that language been fulfilled in the case of Judas, that, beyond all doubt, the Holy Spirit, whose organ David was in making these declarations, contemplated Judas, Christ's adversary, as the one whose doom it emphatically described; so that it was concerning Judas, even more remarkably than concerning any enemies of David, that the Holy Spirit had spoken. || *Which was guide to them that took Jesus.* Judas Iscariot agreed with the chief priests to deliver up Jesus to them (Matt. 26: 14-16), led the multitude who went to seize him, and with a kiss pointed out to them the very person. Matt. 26: 47-49.

17. *For he was numbered with us;* he belonged to our number, as one of the apostles. || *Had obtained part of this ministry;* had been admitted by the Lord to the service for which the apostles had been appointed. This verse appears to give a reason for considering the scripture, which was in the apostle Peter's mind, as relating to Judas. To show its applicableness to Judas, it was proper to remind the hearers that Judas had been an apostle, and admitted to friendship with the Saviour. Though

us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity;

thus distinguished, he had become a traitor, and had fallen under the special displeasure of God. Viewing the passage in this connection, they would see how well it described the doom of Jesus.

18, 19. These verses did not, probably, form a part of Peter's address, as the information which they contain was not at all needed by his hearers; the sad events having so recently taken place, and being universally known in Jerusalem. They are the language of the historian Luke, intended to give information to his readers. Luke had not, in his Gospel, given any account of the tragical end of Judas Iscariot. Theophilus, therefore, to whom he dedicated both his Gospel and the present work, would need the information here communicated, in order thoroughly to understand the address of Peter. It would be well to include these verses in a parenthesis; and then the quotation from the Scripture would stand in almost immediate connection with the apostle's mention of it.

18. *This man purchased a field.* The evangelist Matthew (27: 3-7) informs us that Judas, uneasy in his conscience, would not retain the money he had received for betraying Jesus, but carried it back to the chief priests and elders. They, however, regarding it as the price of blood, or money which had been paid to procure a person's death, would not put it into the treasury of the temple, but bought a potter's field with it, to bury strangers in. As the field was bought with money that was owned by Judas, he is said to have purchased it, though he did not personally make the purchase. An action is often said to be done by a person who is himself, properly, only the occasion of its being done. "No such thing," says Lightfoot, "was in Judas's intention when he bargained for his

and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be

money. But Peter sheweth the fruit and profit of his wretched covetousness; and how he, that thought to enlarge his resources, and to settle his habitation, by such horrid means, came home by it with the contrary: his revenues, to purchase land for others; — his habitation, to be desolate; — and himself, to come to so sad an end." || *Falling headlong, he burst asunder, &c.* From Matt. 27: 5, we learn that Judas hanged himself. Luke here gives us the additional information of what afterwards happened. Judas probably hanged himself near the edge of some precipice, and, perhaps, on the limb of a tree. The limb giving way, or the rope breaking, he, of course, fell, and met with the fate here mentioned.

19. *In their proper tongue*; in their own tongue, the language or dialect spoken by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This was a form of the Hebrew language, radically the same, but having undergone many changes. The term *Syro-Chaldaic* is often employed among the learned to denote that dialect. || *Aceldama*; a word compounded of two Syro-Chaldaic words, meaning, as the sacred writer himself explains, *a field of blood*. Matthew, also, relates in 27: 8, that the field received that name and retained it even to the time when he wrote his Gospel.

20. *It is written in the book of Psalms, &c.* The apostle proceeds to quote two passages; one from Ps. 60: 25, "Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents;" and the other from Ps. 109: 8, "Let another take his office." These passages had been remarkably ful-

filled in Judas. His habitation had become desolate, or ruin had befallen him, in consequence of his unrighteous treatment of the Lord Jesus; and a vacancy had been thereby occasioned in the number of the apostles, so that it was proper for another to be appointed to take his office. It would have been better, if our translators had here employed the word *office*, as used in the Old Testament, instead of the word *bishopric*.

21. *Wherefore of these men which have companied with us*, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John*, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one

filled in Judas. His habitation had become desolate, or ruin had befallen him, in consequence of his unrighteous treatment of the Lord Jesus; and a vacancy had been thereby occasioned in the number of the apostles, so that it was proper for another to be appointed to take his office. It would have been better, if our translators had here employed the word *office*, as used in the Old Testament, instead of the word *bishopric*.

21. *These men which have companied with us*; the men who have belonged to our company. || *All the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*; during the time that the Lord Jesus was occupied among us in the duties of his office, introducing the new religion, inculcating its truths, and gathering disciples to himself.

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John*. The word *beginning* here relates to the Lord Jesus. His public life commenced with his being baptized by John; and a person, in order to be a qualified witness for Jesus as the Messiah, must have been personally acquainted with events pertaining to him from that time. || *Unto that same day that he was taken up from us*; taken up into heaven. The extent of time is from the commencement of Jesus' public life to his ascension. It includes the great events of his crucifixion and his resurrection from the dead || *Must one be ordained*; that is, appointed. The word *ordain* is not here used with reference to any particular ceremony, as when we now speak of a minister's being ordained. The idea is, simply, that some one of the men,

be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

who had been associated with the apostles and disciples from the commencement of the Saviour's public ministry till his ascension, should be selected to act in the place of Judas. Nor are we to understand the apostle Peter as affirming the absolute necessity of maintaining the number *twelve* among the apostles, as though there was some sacredness in that number, and as though the cause of Christ could not be advanced without a successor to Judas. He meant to affirm the special propriety of appointing a successor. Jesus had, originally, selected twelve men; one of them had proved a traitor, and had hurried himself to perdition. It was specially proper that the vacancy should be supplied; and, in order to be rightly supplied, a man must be selected who had been personally acquainted with events from the baptism of Jesus. By having the original number completed, one of the Saviour's objects in appointing twelve might still be answered; namely, that the apostles might go forth two by two. When Jesus selected the twelve, he chose them from among a larger number who were in the habit of associating with him and attending on his instructions. There were, then, others besides the eleven who could testify to the facts in his history from the beginning of his public life; and from among these a choice might be made. || *To be a witness with us of his resurrection.* It was of indispensable importance that one occupying the place of an apostle should be able to bear personal testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. For this was the crowning evidence of his being the Messiah. See Matt. 12: 40. 20: 19. 26: 32. Rom. 1: 4. It consequently formed a chief topic in the preaching of the apostles. Compare Acts 2: 24, 32. 3: 15. 4: 33. 1 Cor. 15: 3, 4. With this great

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of

fact all the doctrines and principles of the Christian religion were most intimately connected; so that this might be mentioned as a part for the whole—the great central truth in which the whole system united. To bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus was to bear witness of his being the Messiah, and to give testimony to the divinity of his religion.

REMARK. How evidently were Peter and the other faithful apostles men of sincerity! They not only sought for no merely pretended friends, however powerful they might be; they did not even allow any of their own company, how faithful and zealous soever, to be a candidate for the apostleship, unless he had personal knowledge of the facts pertaining to Jesus from the beginning; so that his testimony might be an independent and unquestionable one. They sought not display, or any imposing show of circumstances. They were anxious for *truth* to be maintained, and that by the proper witnesses, however inconsiderable they might be in the world's esteem.

23. *And they appointed two.* The company proposed two men as candidates for the vacant office. || *Joseph—Matthias.* Who these were, further than is mentioned in this verse, we have not the means of ascertaining. The various conjectures of commentators are of no use. The surname *Justus*, given to one of these men, Joseph, was a word of Latin origin, applied, perhaps, in consequence of his signal reputation for integrity.

24. *Which knowest the hearts of all men.* Compare 15: 8. || *Whether of these two;* which one of these two.

25. *That he may take part, &c.;* that he may participate in this office of the apostleship. || *That he might go to his own place;* the place proper

this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their

for such a man, most fitting for one of his character. The world of final misery is, doubtless, here meant. To this the conduct of Judas, in the midst of so many advantages for rightly estimating the character of Jesus, and for rendering signal service to him, made it suitable that he should be consigned, or, rather, suitable that he should go; for he evidently rushed upon his own destruction. Townsend mentions it as a common sentiment among the Jews, that "he who betrayeth an Israelite shall have no part in the world to come," and remarks that in a Jewish commentary on Num. 24: 25, it is said, "Balaam went to his own place, that is, into hell."

"No dignity of office," Doddridge well observes, "can secure men from sin; and when they break through the solemn bonds of a remarkably high and eminent profession, they must expect a punishment proportionably signal." For all of us there is a place in the future world, appropriate to our characters. Are we righteous, or unrighteous? believers in Jesus, or neglecters of the great salvation? Our future and final recompense will accord with God's estimate of our characters.

26. *They gave forth their lots.* That is, the persons whose business it was, or who had been appointed to cast the lots, did so. Among the ancients, it was customary to cast lots, in order to decide on important and doubtful matters, whether civil or sacred. The practice was also frequent among the ancient Hebrews, in cases of special importance, when they felt the need of divine guidance. This method of deciding was resorted to, because it appeared so evident a referring of the matter to divine providence. Hence Solomon says, in Prov. 16: 33, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Pious men, doubtless, resorted

lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

to this method of decision in a conscientious and devout frame of mind, submitting all their affairs to the control of God. They were encouraged to expect divine direction; and this was one of the ways in which God frequently led the Hebrews to a proper result. Compare Josh. 7: 14, 15. 1 Sam. 10: 20, 21. 1 Chron. 24: 5-7. We, however, in this age of the world, are so differently situated in regard to acquiring a knowledge of God's will, that a resort to lots for deciding an important question can scarcely ever, if indeed ever, be judicious. A careful study of the Holy Scriptures, an examination of all the circumstances connected with any particular case, with prayer to God and consultation with judicious and pious friends, will almost invariably lead to a right result. In what manner the Christian company proceeded, on the occasion here mentioned, in giving forth their lots, we are not informed. The methods among the ancients were various. The most frequent, probably, was, to place tickets, with the proper words on them, in an urn, and draw them forth. The transaction differed from voting, inasmuch as, probably, only two tickets were used, on each of which was written the name of one candidate. || *And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.* Thus the original number was again rendered complete. A question, however, has sometimes been raised whether this choice of a successor to Judas was not premature, and whether it received the sanction of Heaven. The choice was, indeed, made before the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was necessary in order to complete the apostles' qualification for very important measures pertaining to their office. Besides, we have not, in the New Testament, any further notice of Matthias as an apostle, unless, indeed, he was among the

CHAPTER II.

1 The apostles, filled with the Holy Ghost, and speaking divers languages, are admired by some, and derided by others. 14 Whom Peter disproving, and showing that the apostles spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus was risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, had poured down the same Holy Ghost, and was the Messias, a man known to them to be approved of God by his miracles, wonders,

and signs, and not crucified without his determinate counsel and foreknowledge: 37 he baptizeth a great number that were converted. 41 Who afterwards devoutly and charitably converse together: the apostles working many miracles, and God daily increasing his church.

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

apostles who stood up in company with Peter when he addressed the people on the day of Pentecost. It should be remembered, too, that the design of Luke in writing the Acts of the Apostles, was such as to give him no occasion to speak afterwards of Matthias; and he makes no mention of several other apostles. We know, indeed, that, at a subsequent period, the Lord Jesus gave a special commission to Saul of Tarsus to be his chosen apostle (26: 16—18). Still the transaction was performed in a very devout manner, with a practical referring of it to divine providence. The question is one of those very numerous ones, which the wisdom of God has not seen fit to give us the means of answering. It is an inquiry suggested rather by curiosity, than as tending to any practical benefit.

CHAPTER II.

1. *The day of Pentecost*; one of the three great annual festivals of the Jews. It was a festival of thanksgiving for the harvest, and was therefore called *the feast of harvest* (Ex. 23: 16), and *the day of the first-fruits*. Num. 28: 26. It was also called *the feast of weeks*, because it was appointed to be held after a succession of seven weeks from the second day of the passover. Ex. 34: 22. Lev. 23: 15, 16. Num. 28: 26. Deut. 16: 9, 10. As it was designed to be a grateful acknowledgment of the divine bounty in giving a harvest, an oblation was to be presented to the Lord, of two loaves made of new flour, besides the burnt-offerings and offerings for sin. See Lev. 23: 17—

19. Num. 28: 26—31. The word *Pentecost* is of Greek origin, and signifies *fiftieth*. It became the name of this festival, because the appointed time for the festival was after seven weeks, or forty-nine days, from the second day of the passover. This, then, was *the fiftieth* from that day. See Lev. 23: 16.

It is also commonly stated, though the circumstance is nowhere alluded to in the Mosaic ritual, that at the feast of Pentecost a commemoration was made of the giving of the law from mount Sinai; as it was believed that that event occurred on the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt, that is, from the first passover. The Israelites left Egypt the fifteenth day of the first month (according to their sacred year), that is, April, and arrived at Sinai in the third month after, as is generally supposed, on the first day of the month. Ex. 19: 1. As their months were lunar, this day was the forty-sixth after their departure. The next day, probably, "Moses went up the mount unto God" (Ex. 19: 3); and three days after (Ex. 19: 11), the law was given. Certainty, however, on this point cannot be attained; as, in Ex. 19: 1, the words *the same day* may mean, not the same day on which the month commenced, but the same day of the month on which they left Egypt, that is, the fifteenth. If, however, the law of Moses was given on the fiftieth day after the passover at the departure from Egypt, the coincidence is a striking one, that on the fiftieth day from the passover at the death of Christ, the effusion of the Holy Spirit took place, so remarkably confirming

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing

and establishing the gospel, of which the Mosaic dispensation was so eminently a type.

The great annual festivals were occasions of general resort to Jerusalem, on the part of the males among the Jews. Compare Ex. 34:23. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was contemporary with the apostles, informs us that in his day Jews in great abundance repaired to Jerusalem on the joyful occasion of the Pentecost. The festival, at the time of which the sacred writer is here giving an account, was to be remarkably signalized, in the providence of God, as the occasion of giving a striking manifestation of the Messiahship of Jesus. At the preceding festival—that of the passover—when immense crowds thronged the city, he had been crucified, and had thus passed through the scene of his deepest humiliation and ignominy. But now, having arisen from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, he was to send forth the Holy Spirit, and, in presence of assembled multitudes of Jews from all quarters, was to manifest his power and glory. Many, who had witnessed the reproaches that had been heaped on him, were now to witness a different scene, and to be brought to acknowledge him as the great Saviour of men. How fitting a time for signally vindicating the Saviour's glory, was the first occasion for a general assembling of the Jews at Jerusalem after his deepest humiliation! The shortness of the interval between the two festivals—only fifty days—would present, in vivid contrast, the ignominy and the glory of Jesus. || *Was fully come.* The full space of time between the passover and the Pentecost was completed, and the day of Pentecost was introduced. Whether the day of Pentecost, in the year here spoken of, was the Lord's day,—that is, the Christian sabbath,—cannot be satisfactorily decided. || *They were all with one accord, &c.* The whole

mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

company of one hundred and twenty, mentioned in 1:15, is doubtless here meant. They were of one heart. The apostles were no longer inclined to dispute among themselves, Who shall be greatest? See Mark 9:34. The rest of the company indulged in no heart-burning or envy toward one another. They possessed unity of spirit, and were joined together by the bond of peace. They thus had the best preparation for the special visitation of the Holy Spirit; for his influences "are most to be expected where there is the greatest unanimity and the greatest devotion." They would naturally seek one another's society on this day of a religious festival. They were in daily expectation, too, that their Lord's promise would be fulfilled; for he had spoken of only *a few days* intervening before the Spirit's influences would be imparted. Compare 1:5.

2. *A sound from heaven*; from the upper regions of the air, whence winds and tempests proceed. || *As of a rushing mighty wind*; a noise like that of a violent wind rushing along. This was the external indication of the Spirit's descent. There seems a special appropriateness in employing the sound, or noise, of wind, to betoken the approach of the Spirit, as, in the ordinary language of the Jews, the word used for *spirit* is the same as also signifies *wind*. It is worthy of notice that, when our Lord wished to convey to Nicodemus instruction concerning the Spirit's operation on the soul of man in regeneration, he drew an illustration from the wind. See John 3:8. Both in respect to the word rendered *spirit*, and in respect to the divine agent himself, and likewise to our judging of his agency by the effects produced, a resemblance could be most easily presented. So when our Lord said to his apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22), he *breathed* on them. That the sound on the day of Pentecost was actually that of a violent wind, Luke

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of

does not say, but that it *resembled* such a noise. He could, probably, find no word that would properly express what was really heard; it was more like the noise of a wind than of any thing else. It was altogether of a supernatural character. This sound, as of a wind, the apostles and their company would readily understand, in all probability, as a sign from above of the Spirit's coming; and they, doubtless, held themselves ready for some immediate manifestation of his presence and agency. || *It filled all the house, &c.* The noise was heard throughout the house where the company was assembled. Some have supposed that the word *house* here signifies an apartment in the temple at Jerusalem. But it is wholly unreasonable to suppose that the followers of Christ would seek to be accommodated, as a *company*, in the Jewish temple, or that the Jewish authorities would favor them with accommodations in that edifice. The place was, doubtless, a private dwelling; perhaps—though we have no information on the point—in the vicinity of the temple. Early tradition regards it as the same of which mention is made in 1:13, where the apostles and their associates were in the habit of assembling for devotional purposes.

3. In addition to the sound which the company heard, the sense of sight was also addressed; and an appropriate sign was employed as expressive of the duty and the ability to make known among men of every language the glad tidings of salvation through the Lord Jesus. *There appeared unto them cloven tongues.* The objects which appeared were, in shape, like tongues. The common opinion is, that the tongues which appeared were *cloven*, that is, divided into two or more parts, terminating in two or more points, and thus emblematic of the diversity of languages in which the disciples were now enabled to speak. Critical writers, however, are not agreed in regard to

fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with

the sense of the word translated *cloven*; some considering it as meaning *distributed*. They understand Luke as saying that there appeared tongues, as of fire, distributing themselves hither and thither throughout the company. Which of these views is the right one, it is not easy to say. There is no need, however, that the tongue-like appearances should have a division into parts in order to convey the idea of a diversity of tongues; for the mere fact of numerous objects appearing in the shape of a tongue, and settling on the followers of Christ, would be, of itself, sufficient to convey this idea. || *Like as of fire.* Small flames of fire have a shape similar to that of a tongue. Among the Hebrews, accordingly, the expression *tongue of fire* was employed to convey the idea of a *flame*. An appearance, flame-like as to shape and color, was seen. || *It sat upon each of them.* The fire, or the flame-like object, which appeared, rested on each of the company. Not only the apostles, but all the followers of Christ, then present, were thus distinguished.

If the coincidence mentioned in the note on the first verse, between the space of time from the first passover to the giving of the law, and the space between what may well be called the last passover, and the effusion of the Spirit, really existed, it is also worthy of notice that the presence of God was manifested in a somewhat similar manner on the two occasions. At Sinai, the Lord descended in a tempest and in fire (Ex. 19:16—18); at Jerusalem, a noise like that of a violent rushing wind, and the appearance of flame-like objects, betokened his approach.

4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* The tokens of the Spirit's descent were connected with the immediate enjoyment of his influence, and the outward manifestation of it. The Spirit was imparted so copiously, that the disciples are

the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

said to have been filled with it. New and unusual mental power was possessed by them. Their religious views became clearer, and their religious fervor was greatly increased.
 || *Began to speak with other tongues*; in other languages besides that to which they had been accustomed.
 || *As the Spirit gave them utterance*; as the Spirit enabled them to express themselves. Originally, says Lightfoot, "the confusion of tongues was a sad and fatal curse upon the world. Gen. 11: 1—9. But now the Lord, in the fulness of time, is providing, by the gifts of tongues at Zion, to repair the knowledge of himself among the nations which had lost that jewel by the confusion of tongues at Babel."

Various conjectures have been formed in regard to the gift of tongues, particularly by those writers who are not willing to acknowledge it as a miraculous endowment by the Holy Spirit. Some have contended that 'speaking with other tongues' was only an uttering of indistinct, or inarticulate sounds; of course, that no intelligible human language was employed. Others have supposed that the lively use of obsolete, foreign, or unusual words was intended by the expression *other tongues*; others, again, that the speakers, in an excited state of mind, united Hebrew modes of expression with Greek or Latin words; or, that they spoke under the influence of an extraordinary enthusiasm, in a highly oratorical or poetic style, with uncommon warmth and eloquence. If, however, we lay aside all conjecture, and examine the subject just as it is presented in the Scripture, we cannot doubt that, however unable we are to enter into particular explanations, the sacred writers regarded this matter as a miraculous one, and placed it among the extraordinary miraculous gifts of the Spirit. This appears evident both from the book of Acts (2: 4.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

10: 44—46. 19: 6), and from 1 Cor. chapter 14th. Nor can we reasonably doubt that the persons spoke a real language; and that by means of this gift of tongues they were able to communicate knowledge of religious subjects to unbelievers, and with much emotion to pour forth prayers and praises to God. Compare verses 8—11. 1 Cor. 14: 2—4. The common view agrees best with the scriptural notices of the subject, and with the usual meaning of the words here employed in the original; namely, that the Holy Spirit miraculously bestowed on the apostles, and on many of the first disciples, the power to use foreign languages which they had never learned. This endowment may remind us of the promise recorded in the Gospel of Mark (16: 17), of which it seems to be a fulfilment, "They shall speak with new tongues." See further on this subject in the note on the 11th verse of this chapter.

5. *There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men.* These Jews were such as had been resident in foreign countries, and had now either taken up a fixed abode in Jerusalem, or were sojourning for a considerable time in the city. Many, doubtless, who went to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, made it convenient to remain till the Pentecost. The Jews here spoken of were in Jerusalem on religious considerations. They were *devout*, religious men, paying a sacred regard to the Mosaic law, and wishing the advantages which Jerusalem presented for observing the rites of their religion. To Jews living abroad, who were religiously disposed, this city furnished many attractions for residence. It was the seat of the temple, and the priests were constantly in attendance to perform the duties of their office. The Jews regarded Palestine, and especially Judea and the immediate vicinity of the temple, as holy ground. Jerusalem was "the

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded,

city of the great King" (Ps. 48: 2. Matt. 5: 35), and the temple was the house of God. They partook, too, of the belief which generally pervaded the nation, that the Messiah would soon make his appearance. A residence in the metropolis of the nation appeared to them, therefore, highly desirable. Some of these men were, in all probability, *devout* in the best sense of the word, truly fearing God, and seeking to know and do his will. They were only waiting for clearer light, for a more full manifestation of the evidences that Jesus was the Messiah, and for influences that would deepen their religious feelings, and bring them to a deciding point, to rank themselves among his disciples. Others were *devout* as Jews, reverently and devotedly attached to the Mosaic law, as explained and practised by the Jewish teachers.

|| *Out of every nation under heaven.* The calamities which had repeatedly befallen the Jewish nation, since their great overthrow and captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, and various other causes, had induced immense multitudes of Jews to settle in foreign countries; so that, popularly speaking, they might be found every where. But however distant they were from Jerusalem, and whatever were their employments, they cherished the warmest affection for the Holy City, and turned their eyes toward it with longing desire. The times of the great festivals were particularly embraced as favorable opportunities for repairing to the city; and at such times, representatives of Jews, dispersed, so to speak, throughout the world, might be found there. See on v. 1. Of course, the expression *out of every nation under heaven*, is not to be strictly interpreted, but to be understood generally, like our common expression, *from all quarters*.

6. *When this was noised abroad.* The idea which appears to be conveyed by these words is, that a report of the

because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed, and

wonderful events which had taken place, namely, the appearing of the tongues and the speaking in foreign languages, was spread abroad. This would naturally be the case, and was doubtless done. The original words, however, of the sacred historian, are believed by the best authorities to convey a different meaning. They may be literally translated thus: "Now this sound, or noise, having been made." Reference may be had to the sound like that of a violent wind, mentioned in the second verse, or to some commotion which might have been connected with so many persons speaking in foreign tongues. v. 4. The sound, which seemed like that of wind, was not, probably, confined to the house where the disciples were, but was heard, and was regarded as an unusual occurrence, elsewhere in the city, though it was, doubtless, more sensibly perceived and particularly observed in the house where the Christians were assembled. The attention of the people was thus aroused; and, without supposing that there was any unseemly confusion in the house where the Christian company was assembled, the voice of prayer and praise, unusually animated and fervent, would direct the people to that spot. In almost any part of the city, and particularly in the vicinity of the temple, where it is quite likely the house was, a very short time, during the day of Pentecost, would suffice for any unusual occurrence to draw together a crowd. It is evident that the disciples were engaged in using the foreign languages before the multitude came together; and in the great freedom of utterance, both in prayer and praise, which accompanied this wonderful gift, there would naturally be some commotion.

|| *The multitude;* a mixed company, in which were numbers of the foreign Jews mentioned in the preceding verse. || *Were confounded;* were

marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans?

8 And how hear we every man

excited and thrown into perplexity. Such unthought-of events would, at first, produce a tumultuous and perplexed state of mind. || *Every man heard them speak in his own language.* The foreign Jews, from so many different parts of the world, and accustomed to so many dialects, heard the disciples speak in all those dialects.

7. *Are not all these which speak Galileans?* The word *Galileans* is here used, not as a reproachful, sectarian name of the Christians, nor as a term designed to mark the Christian company as an inferior and uncultivated multitude (compare John 7: 41, 52), but simply to denote the region of country to which the persons belonged, as it is also used in 1: 11. It stands contrasted with the numerous names of provinces and countries mentioned in the following verses. The wonder was, that persons known to be Galileans by birth and education should yet express themselves in foreign tongues, so that people from so many different parts of the world could understand what they were saying.

9—11. It is uncertain whether the list of geographical terms contained in these verses is to be considered as the language of the sacred historian, thus giving his readers, in a parenthetic way, a somewhat definite and lively view of the various and widely-distant quarters from which these foreign Jews had come to reside at Jerusalem; or whether it should be taken as the language of the persons who were speaking to one another. It is, by some writers, considered more probable that the historian should introduce this list for the benefit of his readers, than that the persons themselves, in conversation, should make so minute a statement of countries and provinces. They think it well, therefore, to include this list of names in a paren-

thesis, so as to separate it from the language of the speakers themselves; and they remark that the writer, having introduced so long a catalogue of names, would naturally, as he does in the eleventh verse, on resuming the inquiry, or remark, of those wondering hearers, repeat, with some additions, the idea he had expressed in the eighth verse. The whole passage would then stand thus: "And how hear we, every man, in our own tongue wherein we were born? (Parthians, Elamites, &c.) we do hear (or, as the original Greek may be represented, How do we hear) them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." These terms may, however, be considered as having been introduced in the conversation at the very time; and so far as the grammatical construction is concerned, no special difficulty attends this view, which is the ordinary one.

The list of names is so constructed as to lead a reader from east to west, and from north to south; or, rather, from a north-easterly point to the west and south. Beginning at Parthia, on the east, we are led to Pamphyllia, one of the southern provinces of Asia Minor; thence in a southern direction to Egypt. From Egypt, the eye is turned in a western and north-western direction to Cyrene and Rome. The list concludes by bringing into one view two regions widely distant, and in a direction from west to east; namely, the island of Crete and the country of Arabia. In all these widely-distant countries and provinces, Jews were found in great numbers.

9. *Parthians*; Jews, who were natives of Parthia, the country which lay east of Media and Persia. || *Medes*; Jews of Media. Media lay south-west of the Caspian sea, between this sea on the north, and Persia on the south. || *Elamites*; Jews of Elam, or Elymais. This country lay north

Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

and west of the Persian gulf. || *Mesopotamia*; the country lying between the river Tigris on the east, and the Euphrates on the west. Mention is made in the Old Testament of these eastern countries, excepting Parthia. See, for Elam and Media, Is. 21: 2. 22: 6. Ezra 4: 9. Jer. 25: 25. Dan. 8: 2. 5: 28; for Mesopotamia, Gen. 24: 10. Deut. 23: 4. Judges 3: 8. The Jews who were born and had lived in these eastern regions, Parthia, Media, Elam, and Mesopotamia, were, doubtless, in many instances, descendants of those who had been carried into captivity by Shalmanezer, king of Assyria. 2 Kings 17: 6. 18: 11, and by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. 2 Kings 24: 14—16. 25: 11. On the return of the great body of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, there were not a few who remained in the land of their conquerors. || *Judea*; the country of the Jews. This would next occur in an enumeration, the design of which was, not to mention every region, but rather to give an impressive general view, so as to show that several diverse languages were spoken on the occasion here mentioned. As, however, the Galileans (v. 7) were Jews of Palestine, it is not surprising that “dwellers in Judea” should understand them when speaking in the language of Judea. Some commentators have hence *conjectured* that the sacred writer employed here a different word, somewhat similar in its letters to *Judea*, such as the word *Idumea*, which word might, by some accident happening to two or three letters in a manuscript of the original Greek, be mistaken by a transcriber for *Judea*. They suppose that the word which Luke really wrote became thus undesignedly altered to *Judea*. There is, however, not the smallest critical authority for such a conjecture; all the manuscripts of the original Greek having the word *Judea*. Nor is there any need of perplexity in regard to

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya

this word; for it would be by no means unnatural for the sacred writer, or for the persons speaking on the occasion, in mentioning the names of different people, to say, ‘The inhabitants of Judea, as well as of other countries, hear them speak in their tongue also.’ It has also been remarked, that it was the *foreign* Jews whom it was the writer’s, or the speaker’s, purpose to mention; and therefore to speak of “dwellers in Judea” would seem to be aside from the design. We have only to consider, however, that, while it was the *chief* purpose to speak of the foreign Jews, this would not be inconsistent with including in the multitude Jews who were resident in Judea; and doubtless the multitude which came together contained in it such persons as well as foreigners. || *Cappadocia* — *Pontus*; provinces of Asia Minor. Pontus bordered on the south of the Euxine, or Black sea; Cappadocia was south of Pontus. || *Asia*. This word is here used in its most restricted geographical sense. Besides being the name of one of the quarters of the globe, it was also employed to designate the country lying between the Euxine sea on the north, the Egean sea on the west, and the Mediterranean on the south, thus including the more generally known provinces of the Roman empire. In this second sense, it was called Asia Minor, or Asia the Less. It was also used, in a still more contracted sense, for the region of Ionia, of which the city Ephesus was the capital. This smallest region to which the name *Asia* was applied, was also called, by way of distinction, *Proconsular Asia*, as being under the government of a Roman officer, who bore the title of *proconsul*. It included the four provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Lydia, and Caria. Asia, in this narrowest sense, contained a large Jewish population.

10. *Phrygia and Pamphylia*; provinces of Asia Minor, the latter lying

about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do

south of the former, and on the Mediterranean coast. || *Egypt.* The writer now glances to Africa, of which Egypt was a distinguished part. In Egypt, and particularly in its chief city, Alexandria, many Jews were resident. Two fifths of the inhabitants of Alexandria are said to have been Jews. So numerous was the Jewish population in Egypt, that they erected for themselves, and maintained till the year 73 of the Christian era, a temple similar to that in Jerusalem, and observed in it their national worship, though they still kept up a connection with the Jews in Judea. || *The parts of Libya about Cyrene;* that is, the regions of Libya towards Cyrene; the regions from Libya to Cyrene. Libya was a large province in Africa, west of Egypt; in a part of which, called *Pentapolis* (as containing five distinguished cities), was Cyrene, a city on the Mediterranean coast. This city was a Greek colony, a quarter of whose inhabitants were Jews. || *Strangers of Rome;* that is, Roman Jews, who were *strangers* (comparatively so) at Jerusalem, having come from Rome, and now sojourning, or having settled themselves for permanent residence, in Jerusalem. A more literal rendering of the words would be, *Romans who are [here] residing.* || *Jews and proselytes;* Jews by birth, and Gentiles who had become proselytes to the Jewish religion; that is, who had renounced heathenism and adopted the Jewish religion; converts to the Jewish faith, though not Jews by birth. All alike, whether Jews by birth or converts from heathenism, were struck with amazement at what was then passing.

11. *Cretes;* inhabitants of the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean sea. || *Arabians.* Arabia was the extensive country south and east of Palestine. There were present Jews who had come to Jerusalem from all

hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12 And they were all amazed,

the countries and provinces here named. But the sacred writer did not intend to convey the idea that the number of distinct languages spoken on this occasion corresponded exactly to these names. He presents to his readers a collection of men from all these regions, who had been accustomed to a variety of languages, or dialects; and these men heard, so as to understand, the disciples speaking in the various languages to which they had been accustomed in the places of their nativity. In point of fact, the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, had been accustomed to the Persian, in some, at least, of its dialects; in Mesopotamia and Judea, the Aramean, or Syro-Chaldaic, was used; in the provinces of Asia Minor, in Egypt, Cyrene, and Crete, the Greek; and in Rome, the Greek as well as the Latin was spoken. || *The wonderful works of God.* The word here rendered *wonderful works* is the same as, in Luke 1:49, is translated *great things.* Reference is made, in this word, to the signal benefits which God had bestowed on men and on the individuals here spoken of, through Jesus Christ. It seems to have been the language of praise for these wonderful blessings, and of prayer for their continuance and diffusion, that the multitude heard.

The gift of tongues appears, from the very few and brief notices which the New Testament gives of its employment, to have been specially used in giving utterance to the devout and elevated feelings of the early Christians, when impressed with an unwonted sense of the mercy of God in the salvation of men. It is reasonable to suppose, also, that it was designed for communicating instruction to people of foreign tongues. But if we may judge from notices in the New Testament, it was in Christian assemblies, and for the purpose of praise and prayer, and for mutual encouragement and exhortation, even

and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

when unconverted persons do not appear to have been present, that this gift found its chief exercise. Like some other gifts of God, it was also liable to abuse, and in the Corinthian church was actually used in a vainglorious manner. See Acts 10:46. 19:6. 1 Cor. 14:2, 4, 19—23, 26—28. It is plain from these last verses that the gift of tongues was sometimes used among the Corinthians, when there were not present persons who could understand the foreign tongue, and when an interpreter would be needed to explain what had been uttered. We are authorized to believe, on this whole subject, that to the clear, full, and heart-affecting view of the divine goodness in bestowing salvation through Jesus Christ,—a view which naturally and almost irresistibly prompts a newly-converted soul to ardent praise and prayer, and to the inciting of others to honor and serve the Redeemer,—there was superadded, in the case of the primitive Christians, the ability, through special divine influence, to utter forth their devout affections and lofty emotions in languages which they had not before used. This miraculous ability ceased, with other miraculous gifts, when the purpose of God to give the gospel a permanent footing was accomplished, and when it pleased him to commit the maintaining and the further extension of the gospel to the followers of Christ, in the use of more regular and of ordinary means.

We can hardly fail to notice, at this point, the indisputable evidence which God furnished to the gospel at this period of its history, that it was really from himself.

12. *They were all amazed.* Compare v. 7. It is the foreign Jews, probably, who are here meant. || *Were in doubt;* were utterly at a loss, as we sometimes say, what to make of the remarkable event. || *What meaneth this?* or, What will this come to?

13. *Others mocking; deriding,*

13 *Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.*

scoffing. By these, it is commonly supposed, are meant the people of Jerusalem and of Palestine who were present. They would be more ready to cast suspicion and contempt on the Christian company, and on the unusual event which was then passing. They affected to regard the whole matter as a scene of disorder. In the same spirit which might prompt some persons to make the inquiry, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46), or which led to the sneering remark about the Saviour, “He hath a devil, and is mad” (John 10:20; compare 8:48), they professed to despise the Christians as a company of drunken men. Perhaps by their not understanding some of the languages which were spoken, they were willing to insinuate that these followers of Jesus were expressing themselves in a senseless jargon. || *These men are full of new wine.* It is not newly-made wine, that is here meant. The season of the year would forbid this; for the feast of Pentecost occurred in June, and the first vintage in Palestine occurred in August. The original term corresponds to the expression *sweet wine*. In Palestine, grapes were sometimes dried in the sun, and preserved in masses; these were afterwards soaked in wine and pressed, and the juice was called by the word here used in the original, or *sweet wine*. The ancients had, also, various ways of preserving wine sweet. Such wine was very intoxicating. Wine would, of course, be used by the Jews at the festival which they were then attending; and, in derision, the insinuation was thrown out, that these Galileans had quite soon made a free use of the cup.

14. *But Peter, &c.* In reply to the expression of wonder at what was passing, and to the charge of being intoxicated, the apostle Peter addressed the multitude, and vindicated both the apostles and the whole Christian company. He affirmed

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem,

that the present uncommon event did not result from drunkenness, but from the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit; and that it was in fulfilment of a prophecy found in the Old Testament, in reference to the Messiah's times. He proceeded to affirm that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, had also been raised up from the dead, in accordance with Old Testament prophecies; and that Jesus, having been received into heaven, had now sent forth the Holy Spirit. Jesus, being thus elevated to the right hand of God, according to prediction in the Old Testament, they ought now to acknowledge as the very Messiah, whose coming the prophets had foretold. || *Standing up with the eleven*; with the other apostles. Peter arose as their spokesman. They also arose in testimony of their assent to his declarations. They also thus showed themselves as leaders of the company which professed to receive Jesus as the promised Messiah. — What a change had taken place in Peter since the night when, afar off (Matt. 26: 58), he had followed his Master to the high priest's palace! What a striking contrast between the boldness and earnestness with which he now stood forth as the advocate of his Master's cause, and the timidity which led him even with an oath to deny his Lord! See Matt. 26: 69—75. He was evidently now endued with power from on high. Acts 1: 8. — || *Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem*; that is, Ye Jews, and all ye that have taken up your abode in Jerusalem. The multitude, though all Jews, were yet of two sorts; namely, those who had permanently lived in the country of the Jews, and those who had come from foreign lands to dwell in Jerusalem. Those "dwelling at Jerusalem" were the Jews who had removed from foreign countries. See

be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but*

on v. 5. The apostle's address was directed to both these classes; it refuted the calumny of the one, and sought to clear up the doubts and perplexity of the other, and to convince both that Jesus was the true Messiah. || *Be this known to you*; let this surprising matter be explained to you.

15. *Seeing it is but the third hour of the day.* The third hour of the day, among the Jews, corresponded to our nine o'clock in the morning, and was the stated hour of morning prayer. The apostle argued that, as it was only nine o'clock in the morning, it could not with any reason be supposed that he and his associates were under the influence of wine. Modern readers may not, at once, see the entire conclusiveness of the argument. But the people to whom it was addressed, must instantly have seen how applicable and convincing it was; for religious Jews abstained from eating and drinking till after the hour of morning prayer. And particularly is it said, that on the solemn festival days, such as the day of Pentecost, they were in the habit of neither eating nor drinking till noon. This practice was carefully observed by all who made any pretensions to a reverent regard for religion; and there were few indeed among the Jews, who did not make such pretensions. The fact, then, in these circumstances, that the apostles and their associates had, to say the least, a reputation for respectability and piety, was enough to rebut the calumny. Even among the Gentiles, it was disgraceful to be seen abroad during day in a state of intoxication. Compare 1 Thess. 5: 7. The charge was evidently an inconsiderate calumny. But, as Dr. Lightfoot well remarks, "malice is often senseless and reasonless in her accusations, especially when it is bent against religion." Let us not be surprised, if the more common operations of the Spirit on the souls of men, at the present

the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,

17 And it shall come to pass in

day, excite ridicule and scoffing among the irreligious and the inconsiderate.

16. *This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.* The wonderful events of that day, the apostle declared, were a fulfilment of the prophet Joel's prediction. See Joel 2:28—32. The apostle was addressing his countrymen, the Jews, who would feel the weight of an appeal to their sacred Scriptures.

17—21. These five verses contain the passage of the prophet Joel, which was on that day beginning, at least, to be fulfilled. The purport of this prophecy appears to be, that in the days of the Messiah there should be a general and signal outpouring of the Spirit, which would impart a remarkable knowledge of religion, and sense of its power; that the Spirit's special influences should not be confined to any class, or age, or sex; and that, in connection with the coming of the Messiah's times, there would be dreadful judgments, the only way of escape from which would be, to become devoted followers of the Messiah.

17. *In the last days.* This is one of the expressions which were employed by the Jews to signify the *times of the Messiah*. The period of the Messiah's reign on the earth, or his dispensation, was to be the last in a series of dispensations. Other times, as, for instance, the times of Abraham and the patriarchs, and the times of the Mosaic dispensation, were introductory to this; and this was to be the last. Accordingly, we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:2) that "God—hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by his Son;" and in 1 Pet. 1:20, that "Christ—was manifested in *these last times*." Of the same purport is the expression in Heb. 9:26, "Now once in the *end of the world* hath Christ appeared to put away sin." The expression was used comparatively. While the prophets were actually employed in their office,

the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and

and previously to the appearing of the Messiah, the times were called *these times*, times now passing; but the Messiah's days, which were still in expectation, were *the times to come*, or, as we read in Heb. 2:5, *the world to come*. By a comparison of the apostle Peter's language in this address with that of Joel in the original prediction (Joel 2:28), it will be seen that the prophet uses the word *afterward*; referring to a time *after* the calamities, which he had been predicting, should be removed. The word used by the prophet is of the same general and extensive signification as the expression of the apostle.

|| *Saith God.* These words are not quoted from the prophet. They were inserted, either by the apostle or by the sacred historian, to indicate more impressively the divine authority of the prediction. || *I will pour out of my Spirit.* Joel says, "I will pour out my Spirit." The idea is, I will impart a copious supply of my Spirit's influences. || *Upon all flesh.* The influences of the Spirit in the Messiah's times were not to be restricted to a particular people, nor to a particular class of men, so that only a favored few would enjoy them. But so generally and abundantly would these influences be poured forth, that in every class of men, and in all nations, would be found those who should be acting under a divine impulse, being taught of God, and communicating to others a knowledge of his will.

The prophecy to which the apostle appealed, was only *beginning* to be fulfilled. This beginning of its accomplishment was manifested, as was to be expected, among the Jews, imparting to a company of ordinary persons a knowledge and enjoyment of religion, and an ability to speak forth the praises of God, and to exhibit religious truth, far superior to what might commonly be expected in the chief men of the nation. The full im-

your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams :

port of the prediction, however, was not yet apprehended by Peter himself; for, doubtless, the promise had respect to Gentiles as well as to Jews. And the idea had not yet gained possession of his mind, that to the Gentiles, *as such*, without being first converted to Judaism, would also be granted the special influences of the Spirit. A particular revelation was needed to teach him this great truth, as appears from the tenth chapter of this book. || *Shall prophesy*; shall enjoy influences similar to those of prophets, and be enabled to express themselves on religious subjects, in praise, and instruction, and exhortation, as prophets formerly did. They shall speak under a divine impulse, as taught and influenced by God. True prophets among the Hebrews, besides being employed to foretell future events, were eminent for their knowledge of religion and ability to instruct in it, and were justly regarded as enjoying the peculiar favor of God. So, in the Messiah's days, his followers would be held as peculiarly dear to God, and be honored by him with abundant religious knowledge, and with divine aid in communicating it to others. The gift of foretelling future events would also be possessed by some of them. || *Shall see visions—shall dream dreams.* Both by visions and dreams God occasionally, in ancient times, gave intimations of his will, and enabled his prophets to foretell events, and to give men all needed warning and encouragement. These particular methods of making known the divine will are mentioned, in order to convey, in a still more lively and impressive manner, the thought that the followers of the Messiah would be held in special favor with God, and be honored by him as were the prophets of old. Nor was this special favor to be now confined, as in ancient times, to a particular class; as, for instance, to prophets. It was to be extended to

18 And on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and

sons and daughters; young men and old were to enjoy it. In other words, all the Messiah's followers would be peculiarly dear to God, and receive from him signal tokens of honor. They would all receive from him gifts and graces, and be able to give evidence that they were acting, as were the prophets, under a divine influence.

18. *And on my servants, and on my handmaidens, will I pour out, &c.* In the prophet Joel we read, "And upon the servants, and upon the handmaidens, in those days will I pour out my Spirit." Thus still further is the idea conveyed, that persons of every class should enjoy distinguished benefits in the Messiah's time; the servants and the handmaidens too, as well as sons and daughters, young men and old, should signally partake of the Spirit, and be honored as were the prophets of old. The apostle Peter had, probably, the same idea; but added to it the thought, that God would acknowledge the followers of the Messiah belonging to this class, as *his* servants and *his* handmaidens. When compared with the times of the prophets, how blessed were to be the Messiah's times! His followers of every class were to enjoy divine influences signally great, making them resemble the few, in ancient times, who enjoyed the distinction of being prophets, and of being intimately favored of God. We can hardly fail to recall here the interesting remark of our Lord concerning John the Baptist, in Matt. 11:11—"Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." So immensely superior are the blessings connected with the Messiah's dispensation, to any of the advantages for divine knowledge and spiritual comfort possessed in any preceding times. The special favor of God bestowed on the followers of Christ, as com-

they shall prophesy:

19 And I will show wonders in

pared with those who lived in former ages, may be seen in the superior religious knowledge which the gospel imparts, the far greater amount of spiritual influence which accompanies it on the characters of men, and the superior use which God makes of even very humble instruments in promoting the cause of religion.

19, 20. The apostle continues the quotation from Joel, and, by the use of the prophet's language, shows that direful calamities were to be expected. The expressions are highly poetic and figurative, such as were frequent among the Hebrew prophets when they were predicting the overthrow and devastation of cities and countries. Compare Is. 13: 9, 10. 34: 4. Ez. 32: 7, 8. In predicting such calamities, the prophets not only used such very forcible expressions as the *turning of the sun into darkness* and *of the moon into blood*, — as if the whole creation was to be convulsed, — but they also accommodated themselves to the ordinary apprehensions which men indulge, when they are anticipating public and national disasters. At such times, fear prevails; and an agitated state of mind pervades the community. There is a readiness to construe into signs of coming desolation, any unusual appearances in the air or on the earth. Almost any unusual occurrences will, at such times, be thus regarded; such, for instance, as the appearance of meteors in the air, or comets, unusually dark and cloudy weather, violent storms, and earthquakes. The disposition thus to interpret such events, was very general in ancient times. Since such appearances, or occurrences, at such times, and even frequently when there is no general expectation of calamities, actually have the effect of divine portents, filling the mind with dread, the language of prophetic poetry represents God, in his providence, as sending beforehand such tokens to warn men

heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire,

of coming wrath. Hence the fervid language of Joel, quoted by Peter, speaks of *appalling signs*, as well as of *dreadful events*; and this language would be generally understood, by its readers and hearers, as a vivid description of calamitous times, which God, in his justice and power, was about to send. The judgments which were predicted, would fall on those who should refuse to acknowledge the Messiah, and to become his true subjects.

19. *I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath*; wonderful appearances in the air, and singular appearances on the earth, which should have the effect of filling men's minds with alarm, as signs of impending divine vengeance. What these wonders and signs would be, is stated in the next words. || *Blood*; perhaps the blood-red appearance which the sun and moon would have, through the influence of dark and thick vapors filling the atmosphere. Such an aspect of the sun and moon might easily be regarded, in an agitated state of mind, as a signal of divine judgments; or, the use of the term *blood*, as a sign of calamities, might have originated from such a phenomenon as a reddish color in the rain, which has sometimes been observed, and which might be considered as betokening *bloodshed*. || *Fire*; perhaps unusually frequent and severe lightnings; or, fiery meteors in the air, such as *falling stars*, and the like appearances; or, comets, sometimes called, in popular language, *blazing stars*, and which in ancient times were so much dreaded on account of their supposed disastrous influence, or of being supposed to forewarn divine wrath, as to occasion the poet Milton's description, —

“ a comet,
That . . . from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war.”

|| *Vapor of smoke*; smoky vapor, or dense smoke. Unusually thick exha-

and vapor of smoke.

20 The sun shall be turned into

lations of vapor probably occasioned the appearances which were thus denominated, and which were viewed with terror, as tokens of great devastations by fire, accompanied, of course, by dense clouds of smoke. In the book of Joel (2: 30), from which the quotation is made, we read *pillars of smoke*, in allusion to the erect position and lofty height of immense quantities of smoke ascending from a burning city. An illustration of this may be found in Judges 20: 37—40, where the conquest of Gibeah is related. There was an agreement between the parties concerned in the attack on the city, that “a great flame with smoke” should be made “to rise up out of the city,” as a signal that the stratagem had succeeded. And at the proper time, “the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke.”

20. *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.* These expressions may still further show the signs and wonders that were to appear, as ominous of calamitous times. If so, the expressions were suggested by unusually dark days, or by eclipses of the sun, which have often filled men with disheartening apprehensions of evil. The sun then seems darkened, and refuses to give its light to the world. The state of the atmosphere also affects the appearance of the moon; and a deep-red color observed in it might well originate the thought of its being turned into a mass of blood. Appearances like these easily inspire beholders with terror, and excite anticipations of distress.—This verse may, however, refer to the calamities themselves which were to occur—calamities so disastrous, that they might be likened to a general convulsion of nature, to the blotting out of the sun and the turning of the moon into blood, as if all nature were going to ruin, and chaos were again to prevail. Language of this character was familiarly used, as is

darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day

observed on the preceding verse, by the sacred prophets when predicting the utter overthrow of cities and states. The prophet Joel meant to produce by this language a lively impression concerning the awful disasters, with which the enemies of the Messiah and of his people would be visited; and the apostle, by repeating this language, reminded his hearers of the calamities which were threatened in connection with the establishment of the Messiah’s reign. The Jews had generally supposed that the predicted calamities would be endured by those Gentiles who would refuse to embrace the Jewish religion, and then to become the subjects of their King, the Messiah; but Peter was about to announce distinctly that the very company to whom he was now addressing himself, the Jews themselves, were in danger of these calamities, and that their only method of escape would be, to acknowledge and obey Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. And what were the judgments which the apostle Peter, using the words of ancient prophecy, was leading his hearers to dread? The language is so framed as to convey the idea, that unutterable woe must be expected by those who do not become followers of the Messiah; and this idea is applicable to all, whether Gentiles or Jews, whether of one period or of another. In all probability, the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Peter, intended to excite in the minds of the Jews apprehensions of divine wrath to be endured by them, and especially by the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, should they persist in rejecting Jesus as the promised Messiah. Their city and nation would be terribly overthrown, and their political state come to an end. Unless they repented, they would perish (Luke 13: 3, 5); and their doom, as a city and as a nation, would be a sad representation of the hopeless misery in which they would find themselves in the eternal world. || *Before that*

of the Lord come.

21 And it shall come to pass,

great and notable day of the Lord come; or, more literally, before the great and notable day, &c., as we read in Joel 2: 31. *The day of the Lord* is some distinguished period, when the Lord Jesus would make a striking manifestation of his authority and power as the Messiah. In the present case, the apostle Peter was evidently anticipating some future time; and, guided by the course of events in the history of the gospel and of the Jewish nation, we may believe that the language was to have its fulfilment in the coming of success and glory to the Messiah's cause, after the destruction of Jerusalem and the entire subversion of the Jewish nation by the Roman power. The connection shows that "the great day" spoken of would be preceded by times of vengeance; and our Lord himself had foretold the destruction, at no very distant period (Matt. 24: 34), of the Jewish power. The destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish national existence, would be, to that nation, as the turning of the sun into darkness and of the moon into blood; and this event was preceded, according to the account of Josephus, the Jewish historian, by terrible signs and wonders, filling men's hearts with most alarming apprehensions. This dreadful event, too, *preceded or introduced* a more fixed and thorough establishment of the Messiah's cause, as it put an end to the opposition which the Jewish power was constantly making to the gospel. Thus it was *before* the coming of the great day when the Lord should display himself signally, as the spiritual King of kings; and the time which should immediately follow that destruction would be *notable*, or illustrious, by the triumph of the gospel. There had been, indeed, events in which the Lord gave marked evidences of his power and authority as the Messiah. His resurrection from the dead was such an event; so, too, was the outpouring of

that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.

the Spirit on the very day when Peter was speaking. But neither these, nor any preceding events, agree with the prophet's language so well, as the protection and success which the Lord gave the gospel subsequently to, and in consequence of, the overthrow of the Jewish nation. The apostle made known to his hearers that a glorious period was approaching, and warned them that it would be preceded by most afflicting disasters. || *Notable day*; illustrious day, a period to be specially signalized in the annals of time.

21. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*; shall be delivered from the calamities predicted in the preceding verses, and from the miseries of the future world, to which those calamities would be a prelude in the case of the Messiah's incorrigible enemies. Whatever doom, both temporal and eternal, awaited those who would not submit themselves to the Messiah, would be averted from every one that should *call on the name of the Lord*. This last expression is indicative of devout supplication to the Lord, of pious trust in him, and of obedient subjection to him; in other words, it is indicative of true piety, leading its possessor to ardent and confiding prayer. The word *Lord*, in this connection, was probably used by the apostle to designate the Lord Jesus Christ. This appears from his declaration in the 36th verse, and from the fact, that in the early times of the gospel the followers of Christ were denominated *those who called on his name*. See Acts 9: 14, as compared with vs. 10 and 17. Compare 22: 16. See also Romans 10: 13, where these very words of the prophet are quoted by the apostle Paul in a connection which seems evidently to refer them to the Lord Jesus. To call on the name of the Lord Jesus implied a reception of him as the promised Messiah, and a heartfelt love and obedience to him, such as his disciples

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these

ought to cherish. It was, then, only by becoming true disciples of Jesus, that the divine favor could be secured, and the doom threatened to his enemies could be averted. Those who should become his followers, calling on his name with an affectionate trust in his promises, and true obedience to his commands, would be saved in time and in eternity.

REMARK. In this verse, the principle is presented to us, on conformity to which our personal salvation depends. He that calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This, however, is far from being the mere external act of prayer. Calling on the name of the Lord implies a deep feeling of our spiritual wants, and an earnest desire for the blessings which Christ bestows; namely, pardon, holiness, and eternal life. It implies a sincere and heartfelt dependence on him for those blessings, and a spirit of obedience to his will. Without such affection towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and such a character, salvation cannot be obtained; nor from a person, however conscious of unworthiness, yet possessing such affection and such a character, will it be withheld.

Let us remember that there is another great and illustrious day approaching, when the Messiah's kingdom will receive its final state. When that day will come,—in other words, when the present world will end, the day of judgment will be introduced, and all men be awarded to their respective everlasting condition,—we know not, nor is it important that we should know. Let it rather be our solicitude to become prepared for that day, and to belong to the company of those who call on the Lord with a pure heart, and to whom the Judge will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

22. The apostle, having accounted

words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man

for the remarkable event of the disciples' speaking in foreign tongues, by tracing it to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as foretold by Joel, and having intimated the doom which awaited the enemies of the Messiah, and the only method of escape from it, proceeded distinctly to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, the Lord of the new dispensation which was recently commenced. The manner in which he showed this, may be briefly stated, as follows: ‘The remarkable effusion of the Spirit which you are now observing, and which is a fulfilment of prophecy, proceeds from Jesus of Nazareth (v. 33), who during his life gave most evident signs of the divine approval, whom you crucified, but whom God raised up from the dead (vs. 22—24), and received to his own right hand (v. 33). This Jesus is, therefore, the Messiah; for it was foretold by an ancient prophet (vs. 25—28) respecting the Messiah, that he should not remain under the power of death so as to experience corruption and dissolution. This actually took place in respect to Jesus, as we can testify (v. 32) from personal knowledge, having been repeatedly in his company since his resurrection. The Messiah, too, according to another ancient prophecy (vs. 34, 35), was to be exalted to the right hand of God. This also has taken place in regard to Jesus. The evidence of this is, the very effusion of the Spirit which we are now enjoying; an effusion, which corresponds to the language of the prophet Joel, and which had been promised to Jesus by the Father (v. 33). This remarkable promise being now fulfilled, the seal of truth is put on the declarations of Jesus, and ample proof is given that he is the Messiah, and is exalted to the right hand of God.’

Ye men of Israel. The Jews held the name *Israel* in great honor, as having been specially bestowed by the Lord on their progenitor Jacob. See Gen. 32: 28. 35: 10. To ad-

approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs which God did by him in the midst of

dress them as *men of Israel*, or *Israelites*, was to use a most respectful term, which would be sure to gain their attention. Compare 2 Cor. 11: 22. The term included the whole company to whom the apostle was speaking, both the foreign Jews and the native inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea. || *Jesus of Nazareth*. This appears to have become a term by which Jesus was familiarly designated. When it was first applied to him, it was probably used in the way of reproach, as Nazareth, where Jesus was brought up, was held in contempt. See Matt. 2: 23. John 1: 46. Compare also Matt. 26: 71. It came afterwards, however, to be used simply as a distinctive term, to indicate at once who was meant, since the name *Jesus*, by itself, was not unusual among the Jews. See Mark 16: 6. Acts 3: 6. 10: 38. It was probably thus used by Peter on the present occasion, and not as a term designed to remind his hearers of the reproach with which Jesus had been treated, or to set forth more vividly the contrast between the *despised Nazarene* and the exalted Son of God. Peter, having used a most respectful term in calling the attention of his hearers to what he desired to communicate, would doubtless avoid any *epithets* that would be repulsive, since he could so plainly and faithfully declare the whole truth, without such terms. And yet, even without design, the bare mention of Nazareth, in connection with the name Jesus, could hardly fail to remind the hearers of the feelings which had been indulged towards him. || *A man approved of God*; having evidently the approval of God, as being what he professed to be—the Messiah. || *By miracles, and wonders, and signs*. We need not seek any minute distinctions between these words. They all bear here the same general signification, and, by being combined, seem designed to show that the proofs which Jesus

you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-

gave of his being the Messiah, were many and various. The *miracles* of Christ were those *wonderful* works, which were *signs* of God's being with him, and evidences that he was really the Son of God. To these works Jesus himself appealed, as evidences of his divine commission. See John 5: 36. 10: 25, 37. || *Which God did by him*. As Christ was commissioned, in his official capacity, by the Father (John 5: 36), and sustained so intimate a connection with the Father (John 10: 30. 14: 9), the works which he performed may be said indiscriminately to have been done by him, or by the Father through him, or by him in his Father's name. See John 2: 11. 5: 36. 10: 25. 14: 10. Compare Heb. 1: 2. Since Peter's aim was to prove the divine commission of Jesus, as testified by his miracles, it was exactly to his purpose to adopt the mode of representation which is here employed, and to speak of God as the author of the Saviour's works. || *As ye yourselves also know*. Peter could with confidence thus appeal to the personal knowledge of his hearers, because the wonderful works of Jesus were matters of public notoriety. They were, with but few exceptions, performed in public, in the presence of crowds, as well as of smaller companies, and in the view of his enemies, as well as of his friends. The people, whether of the higher or of the lower walks of life, were acquainted with them. They were of such a variety of sorts, and were performed in such various circumstances, that the reality of their performance, and of their miraculous nature, could not, with any show of reason, be called in question. Thus the appropriate evidence had accompanied all the declarations of Jesus concerning himself and his official designation.

23. *Being delivered*; delivered up, by Judas Iscariot, to the company sent out by the chief priests and

knowledge of God, ye have taken,

elders to seize Jesus (Matt. 26: 47—50), and by that company delivered up to the Jewish sanhedrim. Matt. 26: 57. By the Jewish sanhedrim, or great court of the Jews, he was delivered up to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea (Matt. 27: 2), who was prevailed on, by their urgency and management, to consent that he should be crucified. || *By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*; by, or according to, the determined purpose and appointment of God. The same idea is conveyed in the Gospel of Luke (22: 22), by our Saviour's expression, “Truly the Son of man goeth, *as it was determined* ;” and by his language in Luke 24: 46, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved (or, was necessary for) Christ to suffer.” The apostle's idea is, that the betrayal and consequent crucifixion of Jesus did not take place (supposing him to be the Messiah) through ignorance or oversight on the part of God, or in contravention of the divine arrangement; but that, on the contrary, his betrayal entered into God's plan respecting him as the Messiah. This idea it was of immense importance to introduce just at the spot where the apostle presents it; for it met and cut off an objection which his hearers would be likely to make against acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah. Such had been their opinions and expectations respecting the Messiah, that they could not endure the thought of his leaving the world in so ignominious circumstances as Jesus did. ‘If Jesus were the Messiah, how could it happen,’ they would be ready to say, ‘that he should have passed through such dishonor, and be finally crucified? If he were so dear to God as the Messiah must be, why did not God interpose, and prevent him from ending his days on a cross, like a vile malefactor?’ Peter forestalls this objection, by declaring that these circumstances, contrary as they were to the expectations, and repulsive as they were to the feelings, which the nation

and by wicked hands have cru-
had been cherishing in respect to the Messiah, were yet a part of God's determined purpose respecting this great object of the nation's hopes; and that the opposers of Jesus could never have so prevailed against him, had not God, according to his own plan, allowed it. He could have prevented Judas and the rulers from treating Jesus so unjustly and so ignominiously, had he seen fit; and the fact that Jesus was delivered up to their rulers, and that they proceeded so far as to crucify him, was not to be regarded as proof that God had disowned him, or that he was not God's anointed One. But the design for which the Messiah was to come, namely, to establish the scheme of salvation, required that he should suffer a violent death, as the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of men. Compare Matt. 26: 53, 54, 56. This had been predicted of the Messiah. See Isaiah, 53d chapter. Both the divine counsel and the sure word of prophecy required that Jesus should be put to death. || *And by wicked hands have crucified and slain*. Some explain the words *with wicked hands*, as referring to the Romans, whose agency the Jews were under the necessity of employing in their endeavors to procure the death of Jesus, since the power of putting to death a person whom they might have condemned, had been taken from them. Before executing the sentence of condemnation, in a case where life was to be taken, the permission of the Roman governor must have been obtained.—The ordinary way of explaining the words, as referring to the Jews themselves, is decidedly preferable. Though the crucifixion of Jesus was, officially speaking, the act of the Roman governor and soldiers, yet it was by the earnest desire and urgent importance of the chief men among the Jews, and by the repeated demand of the Jewish people who were assembled at the pretended trial of Jesus (Matt. 27: 1, 2, 17, 20—25), that Pilate was persuaded to consent

cified and slain:

to the deed. It was emphatically, then, the act of the Jews, devised and plotted by them, and at length consummated in compliance with their importunity, even against the sober convictions of the Roman governor. Perhaps many of the multitude to whom Peter was speaking had been personally concerned in the transactions which led to the crucifixion of Jesus. But even those who had not been personally concerned, had, doubtless, consented to the deed of the chief priests and of the people; and the death of Jesus rested, as a stain of guilt, on the nation. *With wicked hands*, indeed, it was, that they had proceeded against Jesus. No one can read the account of the Saviour's seizure and condemnation, without perceiving that those who took part in it, acted voluntarily and in a most guilty manner. No valid excuse can be made for them.

The declaration of the apostle, which found a response, too, in the consciences of his hearers, that with *wicked hands* they had crucified Jesus, shows "that God's counsels and decrees did not absolve the Jews of guilt in putting Jesus to death, since they were still free agents." The purpose of God was to be accomplished, not by any persons' being compelled, against their will, to be accessory to the death of the Saviour. All who were concerned in it, from Judas to Pontius Pilate, acted according to their own choice, without the least intention, on their part, of fulfilling the Scriptures, and even without once thinking that, in the free, voluntary exercise of their wicked dispositions, they were filling up the plan which God had appointed. Compare 3: 18.

REMARKS. The purpose or decree of God, respecting any conduct of men, does not destroy their free agency and accountability in regard to that conduct; for it is an element in human nature, that men act according to their own choice. They

24 Whom God hath raised up,

are at liberty, so far as the Creator's interference with their power of choice is concerned, to act or not to act; and when in their actions they do what God has predicted, or purposed, they do it because they choose to do it. They feel that, in their daily course of conduct, they are acting, or are not acting, both as to ordinary matters and as to their spiritual concerns, according to their own choice, not compelled by any external power which they cannot resist. Whether the action they perform is good or bad, it is a voluntary one. Wherever a *moral* quality belongs to the conduct, so that it may be denominated *right* or *wrong*, men may act or not act, or do something else, if they choose. The fact that men may be doing things which God has foreappointed, and that, while doing them, they may be perfectly free and accountable, and therefore liable to just punishment if they pursue an unrighteous course, is illustrated in the case of the king of Assyria, whose agency God anciently employed in inflicting judgments on the Hebrews. "I will send him," said the Lord, "against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so [that is, it is no part of his intention to act as my instrument]; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. — Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." Is. 10: 5—7, 12.

The whole history of the betrayal and death of Jesus makes it evident, that all who were concerned in the matter, acted voluntarily. Not only so, but the chief actors must have opposed, in this conduct, the convic-

having loosed the pains of death :

tions of their better judgment and of their consciences. Hence, Judas was so stung with remorse, that life became a burden to him; and he sought relief from present compunctions of conscience, by making the dreadful plunge into eternity.

Let us never excuse our own sins, or those of others, by referring them to some supposed purpose of God, or to his foreknowledge of events. The truth, that God does all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1: 11), is grossly abused, if it is made an apology for our sins, or for our neglecting to seek the salvation of our souls by immediate repentance and submitting of ourselves to Christ. We ought to consider that we are very short-sighted, and of very limited powers of understanding, and there are, therefore, many things pertaining to this subject, which we are not able to comprehend; and many questions might be raised in respect to it, which the human mind cannot answer with entire satisfaction. Still, our consciences testify to our being free agents, and to our being accountable to God. On this subject, and on all questions which pertain to our *moral* nature, the voice of conscience should be strictly regarded, as altogether superior to any embarrassing thoughts which may arise in an inquisitive mind. Let us neither abuse nor silence conscience. It is the main-spring of our moral machinery; it cannot be injured with impunity.

24. *Whom God hath raised up*; that is, from the dead. This was a most important fact in regard to Jesus, as proving him to be the Messiah. He had himself predicted his resurrection, and spoken of it as a decisive proof of his being the Messiah. See Matt. 12: 40. 16: 21. Compare Rom. 1: 4. || *Having loosed the pains of death.* The *pains of death* are thought, by many learned writers, to be equivalent to the *bands of death*, or the *bonds* by which Death may be figuratively represented as holding his vic-

timis. because it was not possible that

They are conceived of as being in his power, fast bound, as it were, not permitted to return to earth. But in the case of Jesus, these bonds had been loosed, and he had come forth from the power of death. This view of the expression is drawn from a comparison of it with a similar expression — *sorrows of death* — in Ps. 18: 4. In the Septuagint Greek translation of that psalm, the words are the same as Peter has here used, and the original Hebrew is generally regarded as more properly meaning *bonds* than *sorrows*. It is hence concluded that the word *bonds*, or *bonds*, would be a preferable one in this passage; particularly as the word *loosed* seems naturally to suggest such a term. There is another view of the expression, however, which is attained in a less indirect way. The Greek word here rendered *loosed*, is employed, by Greek writers, in the sense of *removing*, *taking away*. So, in this passage, God is represented as *removing*, or *putting an end to*, the pains of death by terminating the power of death over Jesus. It is true that the death of Jesus really ended his humiliation and sorrows, and did not introduce him into a state of *pain*. But death is here spoken of, not according to its real influence, so far as Jesus was concerned, but according to the ordinary apprehensions and language of men respecting it. In ordinary speech, death is the *king of terrors*. From the power of this king of terrors Jesus was delivered, by being raised up from the dead, never again to taste of death. The *pains of death*, then, may be considered as a common expression, meaning *death itself* — death, which is ordinarily associated with the idea of pains, and is generally attended with sorrows. When Jesus came forth, once for ever, from the power of death, the hold which this dreaded inflicter of pains had had on him was loosed. It should also be remembered that, in undergoing death, Jesus submitted to the severest

he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on

sorrows; but when he was raised up from the dead, these sorrows were all ended, never to be again endured. *¶ It was not possible that he should be holden of it.* The reason why Jesus could not be retained under the power of death, is given in the following verses; namely, it had been foretold in the Scriptures, that the Messiah should not experience the dissolution and corruption which are consequent on the death of a human being. Jesus was the Messiah; and, as he had been put to death, that prophecy evidently required that he should not remain under the power of death. Nor was it possible, we may add, for him to be holden of death, consistently with the design of Jesus to bring "life and immortality to light," and, after passing through the appointed period of suffering and humiliation on earth, to appear in heaven as the ever-living Mediator and Advocate (Heb. 7: 25) of his people. Nor was it possible, consistently with his very nature and the arrangement made by the Father; for Jesus had "life in himself" (John 5: 26); and though he was to die, yet he was "the Prince of life" (Acts 3: 15), and he declared, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John 10: 17, 18.

25. The apostle now introduces the ancient prophecy which foretold the resurrection of the Messiah. *For David speaketh concerning him;* concerning Jesus of Nazareth. v. 22. As he was the Messiah, the apostle, in accordance with the very statements of David which were to be introduced, might justly say, it was of Jesus, or it was of the Messiah, that David had spoken. The words of David which the apostle proceeds to

my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad;

quote are found in Ps. 16: 8-11. *¶ I foresaw the Lord always before my face.* The word *foresaw*, in its usual application, conveys the idea of *seeing beforehand*, or *some time before*. Here, however, it relates not to time, but to place; as if the writer had said, I saw the Lord always before my face. The person here represented as speaking, mentions his constant habit of setting the Lord before his mind, of regarding himself as being continually in his presence. This constant sense of the Lord's presence would remind him of all the merciful dealings and kind purposes of God towards him, and of the almighty power which would secure the accomplishment of God's kind designs in his behalf. *¶ For he is on my right hand.* He stands by me, as my counsellor and defender. *To be at the right hand* of a person in a time of distress, or in the anticipation of trouble, was, in ancient usage, significant of standing ready to show favor and to extend protection. It was indicative of friendship, and of determination to take the part of that person. Compare Ps. 109: 31. 110: 5. 121: 5. *The Lord is on my right hand*, then means the same as, *The Lord is my helper*, or *defender*.

¶ That I should not be moved; that I should not be agitated by apprehensions of evil, nor disquieted by fear when in danger, nor be finally overpowered by calamity. The person speaking in this psalm seems to be contemplating the evil designs of his foes, and the destruction with which they hoped irrecoverably to overwhelm him. But he confided in Jehovah, who was constantly near him, and who would not allow him to be fatally overborne by calamities.

26. *My tongue was glad;* I gladly spoke of the Lord's kind designs, and of his power, in which I could confide. In the psalm from which this extract is taken, we read (Ps.

moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou

16:9), instead of *My tongue was glad*, My glory rejoiceth. The difference between the words here used and those in the psalm, is explained by the fact, that the words here preserved by the sacred historian were drawn from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was in use among the Jews. || *My flesh shall rest in hope*; my body, though yielded up to death, shall not remain in its power, and experience dissolution, but shall repose awhile, awaiting its speedy restoration to life. I shall abide, when removed from this world, in a state of hope, secure from all fear of my body's turning to corruption.

27. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.* The word *hell* does not here mean the place, or state, of future punishment, but simply *the state of the dead*, as distinguished from this world, which is the abode of living men. It is here used without reference to its being a state of happiness or of misery; but merely as designating the state in which disembodied human spirits are. The soul of Him who is here spoken of, was not to be left in the state of deceased persons, as the souls of men generally are. He was to form an exception, and was speedily to return from that state. || *Thy Holy One.* The Messiah was eminently the holy servant of the Lord. See Is. 52:13. 53:11. 61:1—3. He was perfectly holy in character (Heb. 7:26), and most tenderly beloved of God, as *his* Holy One, for his holiness and his intimate union with the divine nature. John 1:1, 18. 8:29. 10:30. || *To see corruption*; to undergo dissolution; to lie so long in the grave as to experience the decay which usually happens to dead bodies. The idea which the apostle connected with the psalmist's language, was, that the person here spoken of, though he was to die, was yet to remain under

suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt

the power of death only a short time — a time not sufficiently long for the usual decay of the body to take place.

28. *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life*; thou hast shown me the way leading to life from the regions of the dead. I am not to be detained among the dead, but shall come forth to renewed life. This view of the words seems most congruous with the apostle's purpose. As the word *life*, however, is so often used in the Scriptures to convey the idea of *happiness*, the meaning may be, Thou hast assured me of deliverance from all unhappiness, and of being exalted to consummate bliss. This bliss was to be enjoyed in heaven. || *Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance*; I shall be in thy presence, and be supremely happy in enjoying thy special favor.

In the preceding passage from the Old Testament, occupying vs. 25—28, a person is introduced who professes a constant, sustaining confidence in God, with an assurance of being delivered from the decay attendant on death, and of triumph over the grave, and an assurance of admission into the presence of God. The apostle now proceeds to show of whom the psalmist was speaking, and affirms that David, the author of this passage, was not speaking of himself, but of the Messiah. This prediction concerning the Messiah had its fulfilment, he remarks, in Jesus, who had been raised up from the dead and exalted to heaven. He it is, who, ascended on high, granted this wonderful effusion of the Spirit, according to the Father's promise. The apostle has not yet affirmed the Messiahship of Jesus directly, but is evidently preparing the way for a formal and solemn declaration of that great fact. It must have been obvious, however, to his hearers, soon after the beginning of his address,

make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me

that that fact was involved in his course of reasoning.

That this passage of the Old Testament really had reference to the Messiah, we may at once believe on the authority of an inspired apostle. Some distinguished writers on the Bible have questioned whether the psalm (the 16th), from which it is quoted, was originally intended to be applied to the Messiah; and they have proposed various methods to explain the apostle's view in applying it to him. A discussion of this subject would be foreign from my design in these Notes. The learned reader, who wishes for an elaborate and ample discussion of it, and an interpretation of the whole psalm, may consult an article by Prof. Stuart in the Biblical Repository, vol. i. pp. 51—110. It may be proper to present here, very briefly, the opinions which that performance maintains on the general subject. In regard to "the general scope and intention" of the psalm, "I should choose my lot," says the author of the article, "among the interpreters of ancient days. All the distinguished men among them agree, that the psalm relates to Christ, in his passion and his victory over death and the grave, including his subsequent exaltation at the right hand of God. This strikes me as the best and only sure interpretation." This psalm "contains an exhibition of the Messiah in view of his approaching sufferings and death, rejoicing in God as his portion and supporter, expressing his deep abhorrence of all departure from him, his love to those who are devoted to his service, his joyful hope of a triumph over death, and of a glorious, blessed, and everlasting state of happiness at the right hand of the Majesty on high! So Peter and Paul [Acts 13: 35] seem plainly to have viewed and interpreted the psalm. I would fain inquire how they have led the way, and follow on in their steps, not doubt-

freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepul-

ing that they conduct to truth and happiness."

29. The apostle, having quoted from the 16th psalm the verses which were to his purpose, now proceeds to comment on them, with the design of showing of whom David, the author of the psalm, was speaking. *Men and brethren.* This form of address is to be explained in the same way here as in I: 16. The same remark will apply to the frequent instances in the book of Acts, in which the word *men* is placed before such words as *brethren*, or *fathers*, in forms of public address. || *Let me freely speak to you.* The Jews held the memory of David in very high respect, both for his personal character, the glory of his reign over the nation, his being the founder of their royal family, and being distinctly held forth as a progenitor of the Messiah, as well as being a prophet. As the apostle was now about to ascribe to Jesus, whom the nation had rejected, so much greater eminence than could be affirmed of David, he aims to secure the willing attention of his hearers, and begs leave to *speak freely* concerning David, or in an open, undisguised manner, without fear of being suspected by them of a wish to utter any thing disrespectful of David. || *Of the patriarch David.* The title *patriarch* is more commonly applied to Abraham (Heb. 7: 4), to Jacob and his twelve sons (Acts 7: 8, 9), in consequence of their being founders of a nation, or of tribes; they being, in this respect, eminently *fathers*. As the line of Jewish kings, in respect to *natural descent*, began with David, and the royalty was confined to his descendants, David was the progenitor of the royal family, and was thus entitled to the appellation of *patriarch*. Hence, in Luke 2: 4, the descent of Joseph, husband of Mary, our Lord's mother, is traced back to David. || *He is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with*

chre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the

us, &c. That is, David, by universal consent, has never been raised up from the dead. He died, and was buried, and his body underwent corruption. The sepulchre in which David's mortal remains had been deposited, still existed in Jerusalem, and every one regarded that as *David's sepulchre*—the place where, in ordinary language, his remains still reposed from the time of their interment to the day when the apostle was speaking. Of course, then, the language of the psalm which had been quoted was inapplicable to David; it must belong to some other person. The fact which the apostle here stated, all would acknowledge; and they would see the conclusion respecting David which must follow from it. David's sepulchre was an object of notoriety, and was doubtless often visited. Josephus, the Jewish historian, relates that a room in David's sepulchre was opened by John Hyrcanus, a thousand and three hundred years after David's burial. Hyrcanus, a priest and prince of the Jews, being closely besieged in Jerusalem by Antiochus, and having no other means of obtaining money, opened the sepulchre, to despoil it of its treasures, that, by a gift of money, he might induce Antiochus to raise the siege. He also says, that "Herod the king opened another room, and took away a great deal of money." But no one ever pretended that David had returned to life. The apostle's idea in this verse will be made plain in reading, if emphasis be placed on the words *he* and *his*: "He [i. e. David] is both dead," &c.; "and his [i. e. David's] sepulchre is with us," &c.

30. *Being a prophet*; a man divinely instructed concerning future things, and able to foretell what was to take place in coming ages. || *God had sworn with an oath to him*. God had promised in the most solemn manner, using the form of an oath in

fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before, spake

order to express absolute certainty, and to prevent any doubt in the mind of David and of other pious men. "An oath for confirmation" is designed to produce assured confidence, and to end all questioning about a matter. See Heb. 6:16. Hence God saw fit frequently to connect the form of an oath with his declarations, thus asserting, as it were, his unchanging adherence to his promises, or his threats. These solemn promises of God to David are first recorded in 2 Sam. 7:12, 16, and are afterwards referred to in Ps. 89:35—37, and Ps. 132:11. From a comparison of 2 Sam. 7:12—29, with the passages just named from the Psalms, and with the well-known expectations of the Jews respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, it would seem that the language addressed to David was understood as promising that the royal authority should permanently continue in the family of David, and that the idea of an everlasting reign should be realized in the person of the Messiah, who was to descend from David. || *Of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ*. David was divinely instructed that from his posterity, according to natural descent, so far as the human nature was concerned, God would cause the Messiah to come. Compare Matt. 22:41—45. Rom. 1:3. || *To sit on his throne*. David, as king, occupied the throne of the nation of Israel, the national people of God. The Messiah, who was to descend from him, was in like manner to be King of the Lord's people, namely, his spiritual people, of whom the nation of the Hebrews was only an emblem. Hence the Messiah was to sit on David's throne, ruling the people of God. The royal government among the Lord's national people was, properly speaking, a theocracy, that is, a government of which God was consid-

of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

ered as the Supreme Ruler, while the earthly king was God's agent, or vicegerent. This theocracy was to be consummated in the true theocracy, or rather was to give place to the true theocracy, namely, the reign of God in the hearts of men, which should be established by the Messiah's introducing a new and more spiritual religion, and by his being the spiritual king of the truly righteous. Christ, then, or the Messiah, was to sit on David's throne, or to be his successor, by becoming the king of God's spiritual people. God's spiritual people, the truly righteous, are subjects of the king Messiah, acknowledging his authority and yielding subjection to his laws. The Lord's people are those who, in heart and life, are true Christians, seeking to obey Jesus Christ as their king. In other words, the Christian church, when considered as properly distinct from the world, that is, from the mass of men who do not practically acknowledge the claims of righteousness, and in whose hearts God does not reign, are the true people of God, in willing subjection to Christ. When we consider Jesus as having established this church, and his followers embodied under him as their Head, the divine feature in the old Jewish government, marking it as a theocracy, is seen to receive its full expansion; and when we think of David's government, being a divinely instituted one, as emblematic of the Messiah's administration, and preparatory to it, we see how Christ, having established the new dispensation of religion, or laid the foundation of the Christian church, is said to sit on David's throne. We see, moreover, how it could be said that there should be no end to David's kingdom, or royal authority (Ps. 89: 35-37); since that authority was, in reality, a theocracy, designed ultimately to introduce a true, spiritual theocracy in men's hearts, and to be completed in

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

that theocracy. And, in this view of the matter, we see the propriety of the angel's language to Mary, the mother of Jesus—"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1: 32, 33.

31. *Seeing this before*; seeing beforehand the event spoken of; namely, that the Messiah was to proceed from him, and that in the Messiah the promise of his everlasting reign was to be fulfilled. || *Spake of the resurrection of Christ*; or of the Messiah. || *That his soul was not left in hell*; that is, the Messiah's, or Christ's, soul was not allowed to remain in the state of departed spirits. Compare v. 27. The point of the apostle's explanation will be made obvious in reading, by placing the emphasis on the word *his*, so as to show its reference to Christ; thus, "He spake of the resurrection of Christ, that *his* soul was not left," &c., "neither *his* flesh did see corruption."

32. *This Jesus, &c.* This Jesus of Nazareth, whom I have before named, God hath, in accordance with this language of David, raised up from the dead. || *Whereof we all are witnesses*. All the members of the Christian company, then present, were able to bear personal witness of the resurrection of Jesus, having seen him repeatedly since he arose from the dead. Possibly, Peter had particular reference to the apostles who were then standing up as his associates, and were thus giving their assent to his declarations. But so many had seen the Saviour since his resurrection, — five hundred on one occasion (1 Cor. 15: 4-7), — that doubtless all his followers then present had been favored with the sight of him. Many of the apostle's hearers would honestly acknowledge the remarkable fact of the resurrection of Jesus, without distinctly seeing, till it was pointed out

33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise

to them, the bearing of this fact on the question of the Messiahship of Jesus. They might, perhaps, have heard the idle story framed by the chief priests, and told by the soldiers who had been set to guard his sepulchre, that the body of Jesus had been taken away by his disciples, while the guards were asleep. See Matt. 28: 11—15. But of what avail to considerate men could the barefaced falsehood of Roman soldiers be, in reference to an event which, as they said, took place while they were asleep?

33. One additional thought remained to be presented, before the way would be fully prepared to assert that the wonderful effusion of the Holy Spirit was to be ascribed to Jesus. It was not enough that he had been raised up from the dead; he must also be exalted to the Father's right hand. Having thus ascended on high, and being seated at the right hand of the Father, he received the promised Spirit, and poured forth the wonderful energy which was producing so marked effects.

Being by the right hand of God exalted. Some render this clause, *Being exalted to the right hand of God.* This rendering agrees best with the language of the Old Testament quoted in the following verse, where the station which the Messiah was to take is pointed out. It was, however, by the right hand, or the mighty power, of God, that he was thus exalted to the high seat of glory and dominion reserved for the Messiah after his humiliation on earth. To be exalted to God's right hand was an evident proof of the divine approbation and aid granted to Jesus, and of his being admitted to a participation in the divine government, or of his being constituted "head over all things to the church." Eph. 1: 22. 1 Pet. 3: 22. || *Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost;* that is, having received from the Father the promised Holy

of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Spirit. The prophecy of Joel, to which the apostle had appealed (vs. 16—21), was a promise from God, that the Holy Spirit should be signally imparted in the days of the Messiah. This promise, as appears from the declarations of Christ on the subject, was not to be fulfilled until after his ascension to heaven. Compare John 14: 26. 16: 7, 13. Luke 24: 49. Acts 1: 4, 5. Knowing that he had ascended to heaven (Luke 24: 50, 51. Acts 1: 9), the disciples had kept themselves in expectation of the Spirit's coming; and now that the Spirit was so evidently imparted, and the power of Christ was so manifest, they knew that their Master was in the immediate presence of the Father, exalted to the glorious station which had been appointed for the Messiah, and that he had received the promised Holy Spirit. || *He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear;* what you now see and hear, as resulting from the Spirit's power, has been shed forth by Jesus. The multitude saw the tongue-like, fiery objects which had appeared, and heard the disciples of Jesus speaking in foreign languages, which they had never learned. All this was to be traced to Jesus, who had ascended to heaven and taken his station at the Father's right hand, and, as his accepted Son, had received from him the fulfilment of the promise that the Holy Spirit should be poured out.

34. A proof from Scripture was desirable to confirm the declarations of the apostle respecting Jesus' being exalted to the Father's right hand. In the quotation from the 16th psalm, on which the apostle had been commenting in reference to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (vs. 25—28), there was a declaration which showed that the person there spoken of would be admitted to the immediate presence of God in heaven; for it affirmed, "Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy counte-

34 For David is not ascended

nance ; " that is, I shall be made supremely happy in thy presence. Now, this declaration, as well as those which had respect to coming forth from the state of disembodied spirits, was not to be applied to David, who wrote the psalm. It had not been fulfilled in respect to him, but had been fulfilled in respect to Jesus. Jesus had come forth from the abode of departed spirits, and his body had been reanimated : he had also ascended to the final state of glory, having left among his disciples the promise that the Spirit should shortly descend to them with most copious influences. The Spirit had, accordingly, descended ; and they, therefore, had full confirmation of the fact that their Lord had taken his station at the right hand of the Father. This was in accordance, also, with another declaration of inspired prophecy, which represented the Messiah as seated in glory and power at Jehovah's right hand. *For David is not ascended into the heavens.* That is, we all know and acknowledge that David has not been raised up from the dead, and ascended to the final state of glory ; his mortal remains have not been reanimated, nor has his soul left the state of departed human spirits, in order to enter on the final state of the righteous. It was not of himself, then, that David spoke, but, in accordance with his own language in another psalm (110 : 1), it was of Him who was unspeakably his superior, of Him who, as Messiah, was to be signally honored with a seat at Jehovah's right hand.

This remark concerning David's not being ascended into the heavens, is of the same tenor with some other representations of the Scriptures concerning the state of deceased righteous men. The intimations of the Bible on this subject are not so numerous, nor so minute, as our curiosity would desire ; because full information in regard to it is not necessary for any of our duties on earth, nor for our advancement in

into the heavens, but he saith

righteousness. Still, from the brief views which the Scriptures present, there would seem to be a difference between the state of the righteous *after* the resurrection and the state in which they are during the period between their death and the resurrection. This may, perhaps, be illustrated by the case of our Saviour. While he was on the cross, he said to the penitent robber, " To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke 23 : 43. The soul of Jesus, then, and that of the penitent robber, went, immediately after death, to Paradise — a holy and happy state. But after Jesus was risen from the dead, he said to Mary, " I am not yet ascended to my Father." John 20 : 17. A distinction seems to be made between the state to which he went immediately after death, and the state to which he was going after his resurrection. This period between men's death and the resurrection of their bodies, is sometimes designated as the *separate state*, that is, the state in which the soul exists while separated from the body. It is also sometimes called the *intermediate state*, as intervening between death and the resurrection. This separate or intermediate state is, however, one of happiness to the righteous, and of misery to the wicked. It is to the righteous far superior to the earthly state, as their holiness is rendered complete and abiding, the seal is put upon their acceptance with God, and they have a fuller and a special enjoyment of the Saviour's presence ; for that in some way he grants the manifestation of his presence to the righteous when removed from this earthly state, so that they may be said to be with him, is evident from the apostle's language in 2 Cor. 5 : 6, 8 — " Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord ; " " we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." This view is a fair inference, too, from our Lord's language in John 14 : 2, 3 — " I go to prepare a

himself, The **LORD** said unto my **Lord**, Sit thou on my right hand,

place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The state, then, on which the righteous enter at death is eminently a blessed state, to be in which, enjoying the presence of Christ, and associating with the spirits of just men made perfect, is far better than to be on earth (Phil. 1: 23): yet it is inferior to that consummation of bliss and glory which awaits the righteous at the resurrection of the body, and subsequently to the day of general judgment. From this intermediate state, the righteous are to come forth, at the resurrection, to assume their spiritual bodies, and be admitted to the still higher and happier state, that may appropriately be called the heaven of endless and supreme glory; and the wicked, to assume their bodies, and be consigned to their endless condition of woe.—Now, from this intermediate state David had not come forth; but Jesus had. He remained in it for a very brief period; then left it, and ascended to the throne of God. || *But he saith himself*; in Ps. 110: 1, the words of which the apostle proceeds immediately to quote. || *The Lord*. The word, in the original Hebrew of the psalm here referred to, is *Jehorah*. || *To my Lord*; to my Master—him whose servant I acknowledge myself to be. It is the Messiah, whom David thus called his *Lord*. See Matt. 22: 41—45. David, though so great as to acknowledge no human king superior to himself, yet readily acknowledged the Messiah as unspeakably his superior, so that he himself, in relation to the Messiah, would take the attitude of a servant, and call him his *Lord* or *Master*. || *Sit thou on my right hand*. To be seated at the right hand of an oriental monarch, would be indicative of the highest honor and distinction, of the monarch's special favor and protection, and of the person's being an associ-

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

ate in the government. Thus honored, according to ancient prophecy, was the Messiah to be, in respect to Jehovah's favor and protection, and to partnership in the divine government. The prophecy was now fulfilled in the person of Jesus, who had been raised up from the dead, and had ascended on high.

35. *Until I make thy foes thy footstool*; until thy foes are all subdued, and thy cause is crowned with complete victory. Such was the language of ancient prophecy. And in accordance with it, Jesus had been exalted to the Father's right hand, and had shed forth the Holy Spirit to secure the triumph of his cause. This prophetic language contained, also, a solemn warning to those who should remain in their hostility to the Messiah. They would certainly fall victims to the divine indignation. As the apostle's argument would inevitably conduct to the establishment of the authority of Jesus as the Messiah, this warning as to the danger resulting from continued hostility to him would be recalled to the hearers' minds, and tend to excite a reasonable anxiety in regard to their spiritual state and prospects.

The apostle had now completed the view which he designed to present in regard to the outpouring of the Spirit. His object was, to show that this effusion was a fulfilment of ancient prophecy, and that it was granted by the Lord Jesus. Having shown this in a manner adapted to gain the conviction of his hearers, there was an ultimate conclusion, which would irresistibly follow, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and which he proceeded formally and distinctly to announce. He, out of regard to whose mission and undertaking the effusion of the Holy Spirit had been predicted, and who, during his public life on earth, had been eminently approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs divinely performed,—who, moreover, though ignominious-

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard *this*,

ly put to death, could not be retained in the grave, but, in accordance with ancient prophecy, had been raised up from the dead, and had been exalted to a seat at God's right hand, whence he had shed forth, according to promise, the Holy Spirit, — *he* could be no other than the long-expected Messiah, the Son of God, whom the nation of Israel ought cheerfully to acknowledge as their spiritual king.

36. *All the house of Israel*; all the nation of the Jews. The name *Israel*, and the term *house*, or family, of *Israel*, were felt by the Jews to be honorable titles and forms of address. See on v. 22. The most acceptable form of address would spontaneously occur to the apostle's mind, when calling on his countrymen, thus listening to his arguments, to acknowledge, with full and heartfelt assurance, the risen and glorified Jesus as their long-expected Messiah. || *Both Lord and Christ*; both Lord and Messiah. The word *Christ* is here used as the title, or official epithet, specifically belonging to Jesus of Nazareth. Though the nation had crucified him, and had thus with scorn and ignominy rejected him, yet God had raised him to glory and power, and fully shown him to be his beloved Son, the Messiah who was to come, the Lord and Head of the new dispensation, and the spiritual king of God's true people.

37. The effect produced by the apostle's discourse is next stated. It excited deep anxiety in the multitude, and intense inquiry as to the course which a regard to their spiritual safety required. *They were pricked in their heart*; they were penetrated with anguish, in view of their guilt and danger. Their hearts were deeply moved and most painfully affected. They saw their char-

they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every

acter and condition in a light far different from any which had ever before been presented to them. Some of them had been accessory to the crucifixion of Jesus, and felt the pangs of remorse. Others felt shocked at the enormity of the deed, even though, perhaps, they had no personal participation in it. They had not received Jesus as the Messiah, but now they saw the need of possessing his favor. A feeling pervaded the assembly, that they were exposed to the displeasure of God, that they were sinners indeed, and needed forgiveness. || *What shall we do?* in these circumstances of inexpressible guilt and danger, what shall we do for safety? How may the displeasure of God be averted, and the Messiah's favor be obtained? Thus powerful in arousing the conscience was a clear statement of religious truth, and a comparison with it of men's conduct. In all cases, a clear perception of religious truth by an unpardoned sinner cannot but produce anguish.

38. *Repent*. Such was the original direction, when the light of the new dispensation began to dawn. See Matt. 3: 2. 4: 17. Mark 6: 12. In like manner, the Saviour, when about taking his final leave of the apostles, instructed them to enjoin repentance. See Luke 24: 47. The purport of the direction is, Forsake your sinful course with heartfelt regret, and enter on a righteous course of feeling and of conduct. || *Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ*. To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, is to receive baptism in token of faith in him, and of subjection to him as his disciples, making a sincere profession of love and obedience to him. The direction then was, that the persons addressed should receive Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and be-

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,

come his sincere followers, and, as such, should, by being baptized, make an open avowal of their subjection to him. || *For the remission of sins.* The apostle's hearers needed pardon both in reference to their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and in reference to all their sins. Pardon would be bestowed on those who should truly repent and become his obedient disciples, avowing the change in their hearts and lives by being baptized through regard to his authority. The same principle is applicable to all who hear the gospel. Forgiveness is granted to those who repent and become obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus; and baptism is the appointed token of subjection to him, and of trust in him, as our Lord and Redeemer. As on the day of Pentecost, so now, it is *every one's* personal duty, who has not complied with it, to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Every one, for himself, needs the Saviour; each must become a disciple himself, and take his place, as an individual, on the Saviour's side. The guilt of men is their own, personally; so must be their salvation; and so must be their repentance, and their trusting in Christ. || *And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* The extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, as promised by the prophet Joel (vs. 16, &c.), are here, in part at least, if not chiefly, intended. These would contribute greatly to elevation of religious character and happiness. The Jews had the means of well understanding that eminent spiritual influences, producing religious prosperity and enjoyment, were to characterize the Messiah's days, and were to be bestowed on the true subjects of the Messiah. This the predictions of Joel sufficiently taught. See also Is. 44: 3—5. Compare Is. 32: 15. The apostle's hearers had witnessed, on that very day, miraculous proofs of the Spirit's powerful presence. With similar proofs they would them-

and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

selves be blessed, and with still other gifts from the same divine Agent, should they receive the Lord Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour, and, by being baptized in his name, become his decided followers. The miraculous influences of the Spirit, given on the day of Pentecost, were the beginning of fulfilment to the prophetic declarations; there would also be bestowed, in connection with these, more abundant spiritual influences, for enlightening and elevating the truly pious in regard to religious knowledge and happiness, than had been enjoyed in preceding ages. Both the miraculous influences, and those which more nearly affected the personal character and the religious joys of the Saviour's followers, were embraced in the apostle's declaration.

It should be here carefully borne in mind, that the apostle did not direct his hearers merely *to be baptized*, in order to receive the forgiveness of their sins; but he directed them *to repent and be baptized*. Baptism without repentance would be of no avail; and sincere repentance would be, necessarily, from its very nature, accompanied with a spirit of obedience to Christ. Consequently, true penitents, when taught by the apostles the duty of being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, would cordially comply, and thus make an explicit avowal of their belief in Jesus, and of their obedience to him, as the Messiah. Repentance and baptism would be connected together. The external act of baptism would not, *in itself*, be of any avail in the sight of God. It would be acceptable to him, as an avowal of the persons' faith in the Lord Jesus, and of their heartfelt subjection to him. Without this public manifestation of their subjection to Jesus Christ, a true faith in him could hardly be possessed in those days. In the words of Dr. Doddridge, "As Christ had for wise reasons appointed this solemn rite as a token of their

39 For the promise is unto you,

and to your children, and to all

taking up the Christian profession in a public manner, there could have been no sufficient evidence of the truth of their repentance and faith, if this precept of Christ had not been obeyed." It was, therefore, to repentance and faith in Jesus, *as manifested in baptism*, that forgiveness of sins, strictly speaking, was promised ; and as, after having been instructed by infallible guides, and distinctly perceiving the will of God, an unwillingness to be baptized in the name of Jesus, would be a virtual refusing to receive him as the Saviour, the duty of baptism in his name, and in connection with repentance, would most properly be enjoined as necessary for the remission of sins. The case may be illustrated by supposing a government to require a company of rebels to sign an oath of allegiance, that they might be pardoned. Now, making abatement for the imperfection of human government, it would be taken for granted, in such a proposal, that the rebels would truly regret their past conduct, would return to a spirit of allegiance, and sign the oath, in confirmation of their purpose of allegiance. The mere act of signing the paper would not, in itself, be of a nature to secure the government's favor ; but the spirit and the purpose which this act indicated would give it value. The moment they felt within them the spirit of allegiance, after such a proclamation, they would be ready to sign the oath. An unwillingness to sign it would amount to a persisting in rebellion. The moment, too, they felt the spirit of allegiance, they would have a peace of mind and a confident expectation of safety, which peace and confidence would be confirmed by their signing of the oath. So the spirit of repentance and of faith in Jesus Christ prompts to the avowal, in the Saviour's appointed way, of obedience to him ; and when the duty of baptism is distinctly known, and yet is not complied with, there is reason to believe that the heart is not right. God also, by his

perfect acquaintance with every soul, sees the first risings of repentance, and of affectionate trust in Christ ; he may, therefore, give peace and tokens of acceptance, without waiting for the external act of baptism, inasmuch as the temper of mind now possessed will prompt the person to make a public avowal of his subjection to Christ in the divinely appointed way. And when the public avowal is made with a right spirit, it is often followed by renewed manifestations of God's acceptance ; so that the newly baptized believer goes on " his way rejoicing." Acts 8 : 39.

The view of the subject just presented, shows the entire harmony between the apostle Peter's direction on the day of Pentecost and the declaration of our Lord, as presented by the evangelist Mark (16 : 16) — " He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ;" and between the apostle's direction on this occasion and that which he gave on another (Acts 3 : 19) — " Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ;" in which latter passage there is no mention of baptism. Baptism, received in a right spirit, implies a temper of mind which turns from sin with true sorrow, and with trust in Christ. True repentance induces a person to comply with the duty of baptism, when the Saviour's will is properly perceived by him.

39. The multitude, deeply affected by a sense of their guilt and danger, needed encouragement. The apostle, accordingly, told them that the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, of which he had just made mention, and of which the prophet Joel had so largely spoken, was made to their nation, and proceeded from a most bountiful disposition in God, who would fulfil this promise in reference to all, who, however far off now from the professed people of God, and from the hope of eternal life, should hear the invitations of the gospel, and become followers of Christ. With such a view of the

that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words

largeness of the divine bounty, and remembering the faithfulness of God to his promises, they ought to encourage themselves, and at once become adherents to the cause of Jesus. *For the promise*; the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in the preceding verse, and announced with so much particularity by the prophet Joel. vs. 17, &c. || *Is to you and to your children*; to you Jews and to your descendants. The apostle conveyed the idea, that the promised copious bestowment of the Holy Spirit had respect to those Jews in whose days the Messiah's dispensation was commenced, and to subsequent generations of that people, provided they should become followers of Christ. The mention of *children*, in this passage, has occasioned the apostle's language to be sometimes employed in vindicating the practice of infant baptism; but most evidently there is no allusion, through the whole connection, to such a practice. The word *children* is here used, not in distinction from grown-up persons, nor in respect to age; but like the word *descendants or posterity*. || *And to all that are afar off*. The Jews, as being the national people of God, were spoken of as being *near to him*; Gentile nations, not sustaining this relation, were denominated *those afar off from God*. Thus, in the Epistle to the Ephesians (2: 17), Gentiles and Jews are respectively spoken of as those "which were afar off," and "those that were nigh." So, here, the apostle Peter referred to Gentiles who might, by becoming believers in Jesus Christ, receive the benefits which this promise of the Holy Spirit embraced. This mention of Gentiles, as included in the merciful purpose of God, exactly accords with the language of the prophet Joel in predicting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (v. 17)—"I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." || *As many as the Lord our God shall call*; all

did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

whom God shall call, by the proclamation of the gospel, to become partakers of his rich blessings. It is, of course, implied, in order to their partaking of the blessings, that they obey the invitations of the gospel, and become, in heart and life, the true followers of Jesus Christ. How encouraging was this view of the extensiveness of God's merciful designs! However pained at heart the apostle's hearers might have been, the comfort of hope was presented that they might yet receive the rich spiritual bounty of God. Repentance for their sins, and an affectionate obedience to Jesus Christ, would certainly be followed by the approving smiles of God. Similar encouragement is given to all who hear the gospel. None need despond, who wish for spiritual blessings, and are willing to trust in Christ, with an affectionate and obedient heart.

At this early period of the Christian history, and before the special revelation had been made to Peter that the gospel was to be preached to Gentiles (Acts, ch. 10), the truth was evident to him, that men could be truly blessed only by becoming subjects of the Messiah; and that, whenever any could be found, who should submit themselves to Jesus as their spiritual Deliverer and Lord, there would also be found the fulfilment of the promise, that the Spirit should be most plentifully imparted. How much more fully may we, of the present day, enter into these views, than could the most favored apostle on the day of Pentecost! The extensive designs of God in regard to the salvation of men have been perpetually unfolding; and the encouragement to make known every where the gospel of Christ is most ample, as well as the obligations imperative.

40. *Did he testify*. He bore faithful witness to the Messiahship of Jesus, and the guilt of the Jewish people, and earnestly admonished

41 Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were

them of their danger, and of their duty. || *Save yourselves from this untoward generation*; this perverse, wicked generation. That generation had proved itself to be exceedingly perverse. Compare Matt. 11: 16-19. Multitudes of them had been dissatisfied with John the Baptist, and he had at length been beheaded. Matt. 14: 8-10. Jesus himself had been rejected and crucified. Such a generation was in imminent danger of being cut off by the divine displeasure, and placed beyond the reach of mercy. Compare Matt. 23: 34-38. It behoved all who had a just regard to their own best interests, to separate themselves from such a generation by timely repentance and submission to the Messiah, and thus obtain salvation from the doom which was impending over it.

REMARK. In no other way can we, of the present day, be saved from the just consequences of our sins, and from the condemnation of a wicked world, than that which the apostle presented on the day of Pentecost. We must repent, personally, of our sins; must become, personally, believers in Christ, and take on us the yoke of obedience to him. We must come out from the world, and be separate, as a peculiar people. Compare Rom. 12: 2. 2 Cor. 6: 17. We, too, shall then enjoy the abundant influences of the Holy Spirit, and have a title to everlasting life.

41. *His word*; the instruction and direction of the apostle Peter. || *Were added unto them*; to the company of the believers. Compare v. 47. || *About three thousand souls*. How signally was the power of God displayed on this occasion! and how evidently did the Most High set the seal of his approval on the cause of Jesus, and on the labors of the apostles! Thus triumphantly did the gospel proceed after the ascension of

added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stead-

Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This accession of about three thousand persons to the Christian company in one day, has been sometimes represented as inconsistent with the belief that the apostolic baptism was immersion. Such a representation, however, is of modern origin, and is of no weight in opposition to the uniform belief of the Christian church for centuries from the time of the apostles. Nor is such a representation at all required by the circumstances of the case. It has, indeed, been said, that there was not time for the apostles to immerse so many persons on that day, and that, in all probability, there were not suitable conveniences in Jerusalem as to places where sufficient quantities of water for the purpose could be found. No difficulty, however, need be felt on these points. There was a sufficient number of persons to perform the service; for, if the apostles were not enough, there were, doubtless, present not a few of the seventy evangelists whom the Saviour had appointed during his lifetime. Luke 10: 1. There was ample time, for the season of the year was midsummer, and the administration of baptism could be protracted into the evening, if necessary; and the service began, doubtless, at an early hour of the day. Facts, too, in the early subsequent history of the church, entirely agree with the belief that the baptism on this occasion was, according to the proper meaning of the word, an immersion; for, during the early centuries, immersion was the prevalent practice, and during, at least, the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries of the Christian era, and while immersion continued to be habitually practised as baptism, it became extensively the custom to baptize only once or twice a year, namely, on one or two of the festivals which Christians observed, corresponding to the Jewish passover

fastly in the apostles' doctrine

and Pentecost; and candidates were detained until the appointed day, so that, in imitation of what was done on the day of Pentecost, thousands might be baptized in one day. The celebrated Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, baptized by immersion on a day in the year 404, with the assistance of his presbyters, about three thousand persons. Nor was this a solitary instance; authentic history has recorded a number of others. It is by no means necessary to suppose that the baptism on the day of Pentecost was performed at one place; for there was no deficiency of water, or of conveniences for immersion, in the city of Jerusalem. It is well known that there were many and very copious reservoirs and pools of water for the use of the city; and private habitations were well supplied with water for all the occasions on which a Jewish family would constantly need it in abundance. The reports of travellers who have visited Jerusalem, and the remains of antiquity, abundantly confirm this. But even supposing there was difficulty in explaining the baptism of so many persons on that day, there is nothing better than *mere conjecture* to show that the baptism was otherwise than an immersion; and, in the language of a learned theologian, whose connection with the Lutheran church would, doubtless, incline him to support, from this passage, if he conscientiously could, a different practice, it must be acknowledged that "the conjecture, that the three thousand were sprinkled, is too much a conjecture to be trusted."

42. *They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.* They steadfastly attended on the apostles for Christian instruction, receiving and holding the doctrines which the apostles taught. They persevered in the new religious course on which they had entered.—It is not enough to profess ourselves followers of Christ; we must steadfastly adhere to him, as our Lord and Master, in

and fellowship, and in breaking

the uniform performance of the duties which pertain to the Christian life. || *And fellowship.* They were united, in spirit and outwardly, with the company of the apostles and the other believers, and thus felt themselves joined to the Christian society, or the one hundred and twenty who had previously become followers of Jesus. The meaning of the sacred writer would, probably, be more readily apprehended, if the word *in* were inserted before *fellowship* — they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship. The idea, probably, is, that those who were now added to the believers, formed, in company with them, a Christian society, separate from other associations; they continued affectionately united together by their common views and feelings, by the interchange of kind Christian acts, and by religious exercises, contributing to one another's temporal and spiritual wants, as necessity required, or as mutual affection prompted. || *In breaking of bread.* It is uncertain whether by this expression is here meant the partaking of the Lord's supper (as in 20:7, and 1 Cor. 10:16), or the partaking with one another of common meals, as expressive of their mutual affection, and accompanied with prayers, as would seem to be the case in v. 46. The connection in which this clause here stands, appears rather to favor the opinion that it was the *religious breaking of bread*, in commemoration of the Saviour's death, that was intended; since the other circumstances, here stated, pertain directly to religious feelings and actions. The expression *to break bread* came to be applied to the partaking of a meal, whether common or sacred, because it was customary among the Jews, at the commencement of their meals, for the head of the family to break up the bread; bread being in the form of thin cakes, and not of loaves.

of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were

43. *Fear came upon every soul*; wonder and amazement pervaded the community at large. The attention of the people universally was attracted to the Christian company, in consequence of the remarkable events of the day of Pentecost, and of the large number of persons who had connected themselves with the followers of Jesus. As appears by the following clause of this verse, the power of God continued also to be shown in miracles wrought by the apostles. A feeling of awe and amazement consequently possessed the city. An additional instance of this feeling is mentioned in 3: 10.

44. *All that believed were together*. They daily assembled together, as being of one heart, and as finding delight and profit in religious exercises and conversation. Necessity, too, would require that some among them, at least, should often consult together. It is not necessary, from this expression of the sacred writer, to suppose that the *whole* company of Christians assembled together every day. But it is altogether natural that the views and feelings which they were now cherishing should prompt them very often to assemble together, in larger or smaller numbers. In the ardor of Christian affection, they delighted to meet one another, and to encourage one another in the ways of duty and peace. || *And had all things common*. They all held themselves ready to serve one another, as members of a family. The poor were not allowed to feel the pressure of poverty, but received a supply for their wants from the ability of their more favored brethren. Those who possessed property cherished an enlarged liberality, and admitted the poor, in common with themselves, to a supply of their wants. The spirit of Christian love was predominant—that spirit,

together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

the prevalence of which in a community shows it to be eminently a Christian community; for “*by this*,” said our Lord (John 13: 35), “*shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*”

45. *And sold their possessions and goods*. The word *possessions* probably meant their landed property and houses, while the word *goods* meant property of other kinds. They regarded their earthly possessions as held in common for the benefit of the Christian company, and not for personal gratification or aggrandizement. Hence they sold their property, so as to have ready money for supplying the wants of the destitute. They obeyed, so to speak, to the letter, in real act, the injunction of Christ in Luke 12: 33—“*Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*” || *And parted them to all men, &c.* They divided the proceeds of their property among the needy members of the Christian company, according to their respective wants. The word *men*, in Italics, was supplied by the translators, and must be understood as relating to persons who belonged to the number of the Saviour’s followers.

It would seem that a common fund was raised by the liberality of those who were able to contribute to it. From this common fund, the wants of the necessitous were supplied by the apostles, as the chief officers of the church. See 4: 35. 6: 2. It does not appear that every person, on entering the church, gave up his entire property, and depended for subsistence on a common stock, retaining no property of his own, so that there would be no distinction of poor and rich. They did, however, doubtless hold themselves ready to

46 And they, continuing daily

give up all, if necessity required ; and some appear to have actually done so. See 4 : 32, 34-37. But that a member of the church might retain his property, if he chose, and that he might give the whole, or only a part, as he chose, is evident from the apostle's words to Ananias in 5 : 4. In 12 : 12, mention is also made of the *house of Mary*, to which Peter went when released from prison. Mary retained possession of her house, doubtless, as private property ; and others besides her, we may well believe, had their houses and other property still in possession. A strict community of goods, in which no one possessed private property, but all drew from the common stock, does not appear to have been formed. It was rather an arrangement for relieving the poor, that was contemplated. Nor does the arrangement, whether more or less extensive, appear to have been enjoined by apostolical authority, so as to have been binding on Christians. It was rather the voluntary expression of Christian benevolence, a sort of outburst of Christian love, seeking to relieve the needy, and giving a practical specimen of preferring spiritual and everlasting blessings to earthly riches. Nor is there ground to believe that the plan was subsequently adopted in other places, where the apostles gathered churches. On the contrary, it is evident that among the early Christians there still remained the distinction of poor and rich, requiring the apostles to give instructions to Christians, on the one hand not to abuse the world (1 Cor. 7 : 30, 31. 1 Tim. 6 : 17-19), and on the other to be content with the allotments of divine providence. 1 Tim. 6 : 8. Heb. 13 : 5. The plan which was thus acted on in Jerusalem, immediately after the day of Pentecost, we have no reason to believe, was made a permanent one, as we read nothing more on the subject after the fifth chapter of the Acts ; and the Epistles contain no directions in regard to

with one accord in the temple, such an arrangement, while yet they contain directions in regard to the exercise of a charitable and beneficent spirit towards the necessitous. See 1 Cor. 16 : 1-4. 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9. Eph. 4 : 28. 1 Tim. 5 : 16. Heb. 13 : 16. It is a matter which seems to have regulated itself by the increasing experience and wisdom of those who were concerned. Difficulties were soon found to be connected with it. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts, ch. 5), it operated as a temptation to a hypocritical show of liberality ; and in other cases, on the ordinary principles of human nature, it might encourage a spirit of idle dependence, when a vigorous state of religious feeling had begun to decline. The ordinary state of things among men, particularly in commercial countries, can seldom require even such an abandonment of private property to form a common stock, as was exemplified at this early period of the Christian church. But the spirit which led these primitive Christians thus to act, is worthy of all praise, and of universal imitation. It was that spirit of Christian love, which will not permit a neighbor to be in want without seeking to supply the want. It was in precise agreement with a subsequent direction of the apostle Paul in Gal. 6 : 10 — “As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” It was that love which “seeketh not her own ;” which leads us to regard our neighbor, especially our poor and distressed neighbor, as ourselves, and to do to others whatsoever we would that others should do to us. It was, moreover, that spirit of self-denial, and of renunciation of the world, which our Lord imperatively requires, as essential to the character of a disciple. See Matt. 19 : 21, 24. Luke 14 : 33. Compare Matt. 5 : 3. 6 : 19-21, 25.

46. *Continuing daily with one accord in the temple.* It was the practice of the Jews to repair to the tem-

and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having

ple at stated hours every day for prayer. See 3: 1. Those who had become Christians still retained this observance ; they resorted to the temple in company with other Jews for stated prayer. || *And breaking bread from house to house.* Allusion may here be had to the charitable meals which the circumstances of many of these early Christians may have made necessary ; they were received, perhaps, in companies at various houses. Such meals would partake, too, very much of a religious character, and, as to the feelings which would prevail, and the acts of thanksgiving and praise which would be connected with them, would doubtless well correspond to the language in the latter part of this verse and the beginning of the next — they would be received with gladness and singleness of heart, and with praise to God. Perhaps, however, the sacred writer intended merely to convey the idea that the believers were every day, more or less, in one another's houses, and were gladly welcomed to one another's tables. Even their common meals would, at such a time, be occasions for religious conversation and improvement. They would eat and drink to the glory of God, and would constantly remember their Saviour. || *Did eat their meat* ; took their meals. The word *meat* is used in the Scriptures in the general signification of *that which is to be eaten.* || *Singleness of heart* ; simplicity and sincerity towards God and one another. They were sincerely attached to one another, and cherished a mutual guileless confidence. — The facts stated in this verse give a practical illustration of the truth, that real religion is a spring of happiness.

47. *Having favor with all the people.* The awe which the people felt (v. 43) in view of the wonderful events that had taken place, was united with a feeling of favor towards

favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

the followers of Jesus, because it was so evident that God was specially with them, and their conduct was so exemplary. Even their enemies could find no just cause of reproach against them. So true it is that “ when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” See Prov. 16: 7. || *Such as should be saved* ; such as by repentance, and faith in Jesus, and public avowal of their submission to him, had entered on the path of salvation. Compare v. 38. The expression *those who should be saved*, or, as some prefer to translate the original term, *those who were saved*, appears to have been a kind of epithet applied to believers in Christ. Compare 1 Cor. 1: 18. 15: 2. 2 Cor. 2: 15. Tit. 3: 5. There is no necessity, however, for bringing into question the correctness of our translation ; for the tense of the original word here employed, though not future in point of form, is evidently used elsewhere in a future signification. A reader of the original Greek may compare Luke 13: 23, and 2 Pet. 2: 9. How interesting a proof we have in this verse, that, when the followers of Christ are eminently devoted to his service, the Lord will add others to their number !

In taking our leave of this eminently instructive chapter, let us not fail to notice the means which it furnishes us of examining our own religious character. Here were persons whose conversion and subsequent exhibition of Christian qualities were very marked. They were first penetrated with a sense of their sinfulness and danger, and experienced deep compunctions of conscience. From this state of distress and fearful anticipation they were relieved, by penitence for their sins, by abandonment of them, and by becoming, in heart and life, disciples of the Lord Jesus. The new character which

CHAPTER III.

1 Peter, preaching to the people that came to see a lame man restored to his feet, 12 professeth the cure not to have been wrought by his or John's own power, or holiness, but by God, and his Son Jesus, and through faith in his name : 13 withal reprehending them for crucifying Jesus. 17 Which because they did it through ignorance, and that thereby were fulfilled God's determinate counsel, and the Scriptures : 19 he

they now possessed, showed itself in an ardent and self-denying attachment to one another, and a steady adherence to the duties of religion. Have we deeply felt our guilt in the sight of God? Have we renounced our insensibility to the claims of God, or our disobedience to his will, and with true penitence trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, taking a decided stand in his service, and seeking to honor him? Have we a heartfelt attachment to the followers of Christ on account of their piety, and of their interest in the Saviour's cause? And are we steadily continuing in a religious course?

CHAPTER III.

1. *Peter and John went up together into the temple.* Though the two apostles were followers of Christ, and placed their religious hopes on an entirely different foundation from that on which the mass of their countrymen, the Jews, vainly placed theirs, yet they still adhered to the devout practices, which had been so long observed by their ancestors. They repaired, as did other Jews in Jerusalem, to the temple for prayer. Compare 2: 46. By observing this custom, they would not only avoid the imputation of being undevout, but would also enjoy valuable opportunities for maintaining the gospel, and seeking the salvation of the Jews. || *At the hour of prayer, &c.* It had come to be customary among the Jews to offer prayer at three several hours in the course of the day; namely, the third (2: 15), the sixth (10: 9), and the ninth, as mentioned in this verse; that is, according to

exhorteth them by repentance and faith to seek remission of their sins, and salvation in the same Jesus.

NOW Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth hour.

2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate

our reckoning, at nine o'clock in the morning, at twelve, and at three in the afternoon. Such appears to have been the practice of Daniel. For though king Darius, in whose employ he was, had been induced to sign a decree which the king's counsellors intended should effect the destruction of Daniel for praying to the true God, yet "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed." Dan. 6: 10. The language of the psalmist in Ps. 55: 17, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud," accords with such a practice, and may have had some influence in introducing or establishing it; though that language, like that in Ps. 119: 164, "Seven times a day do I praise thee," may have been intended merely to express frequency and fervency in prayer.

2. *Whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple.* The friends of the lame man placed him at one of the temple-gates, that he might excite the sympathy of those who were entering the temple, and obtain from them charitable donations. It was not unusual, in other nations, for the poor to station themselves at the gates of temples, in order to obtain donations from those who came to worship. Such a practice existed, too, in after times, in connection with Christian places of worship. Chrysostom, an eminent Christian writer of the fourth century, speaks of "the poor who, for receiving alms, sit about the doors of the church." The sentiments of kindness and sympathy which are so naturally associated with the idea of worship, were appealed to by the sight of distress at the very doors of a

of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

temple. || *The gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful.* One of the gates of the temple, in particular, is described by Josephus, as excelling the others in size and splendor. It was very highly ornamented. Its folding doors, lintel, and side-posts, were covered with Corinthian brass, a metal more beautiful, and much more highly esteemed in ancient times, than gold. In consequence of the appellation *Beautiful*, given to the gate at which the lame man was placed, it has been supposed that it was this peculiarly splendid one.

3. *Asked an alms.* The lame beggar solicited charity from the two apostles.

4. *And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, &c.* Perhaps the apostle wished, by eagerly fixing his eyes on the professed object of charity before him, to become sure that the man was really lame. Or, being satisfied of this, the apostle's language and manner of address were suited to excite attention and expectation on the part of the man, and to commence a train of thought and feeling which might, in some degree, prepare him for the miraculous cure which was to follow. A feeling of confidence towards Peter and John probably arose in the poor man's breast, of the same kind as that faith which the Saviour often required in the distressed, when he was about to work a miracle for them. See Matt. 8: 13. 9: 2, 28, 29.

5. *Expecting to receive something of them.* The desired state of mind was produced; he was led to place confidence in the apostles, and to expect something from them in the way of relief. Of so great a blessing as the cure of his lameness, he had not

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right

probably thought. But since he had been led to place confidence in them, as able and willing to help him in some important way, the mention of the name of Jesus Christ, and of power to walk being given him, would also be heard with confidence. The serious and earnest manner of the apostles would greatly contribute to the confirming of his expectations.

6. *Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee.* The apostles had not worldly wealth; but they were endued with power to perform miraculous cures. They could give, in the name of Jesus, what would be far better to this man than silver or gold; namely, soundness of limbs and ability to procure his own subsistence.

|| *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.* It is difficult to decide, whether the apostle meant to say, As an apostle of Jesus Christ, and relying on his power, I say unto thee, Arise and walk; or, I say unto thee, Arise and walk, placing thy confidence for ability so to do in Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Perhaps both views should be combined. The apostle had confidence in Jesus, and he directed the lame man also to confide in him. The cure was, in reality, to be wrought by Jesus, and was to be performed in connection with faith in his power. || *Jesus Christ of Nazareth.* By these epithets, Peter distinguished the Lord Jesus from every other person, so that the man might know in whom to confide, and in what capacity to confide in him; or, whom to acknowledge as the author of the cure, and in what capacity to acknowledge him; namely, as the Messiah, the long-expected Deliverer and Saviour, who was to bestow all

hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up, stood, and

needed good on his followers. The man was, doubtless, acquainted with many facts respecting Jesus; and the mention of Nazareth would serve, not only to mark out the proper person as the object of confidence, but also to remind him of the indignities, which had been heaped on Jesus, and of the glorious condition to which his apostles had declared him to be now ascended. These thoughts would have a favorable influence in calling forth belief, that the long-needed blessing of soundness of limbs would be imparted to him, as soon as such a thought should be intimated by the apostle. He had, doubtless, heard of other instances, in which the power of Jesus had been displayed; and circumstances had, at length, occurred, which brought to him the prospect of being blessed by the same power. It was not a wholly new name which had been mentioned to him; but one of which he had before heard, as carrying with it the claim to the Messiahship, and as most signally honored on the day of Pentecost; for the most obscure and neglected inhabitants of Jerusalem can hardly be believed to have been wholly ignorant of what had taken place on that day.

7. *And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up.* Encouraging still further his confidence in the name of Jesus, the apostle took hold of his right hand, and helped him to rise. The conduct of Peter throughout was adapted to cheer the lame man, and to encourage confidence in the healing power of Jesus. Nor were his words, nor his efforts, in vain. A corresponding trust in the power of Jesus was exercised, and the wished-for blessing was bestowed.—How important is the spirit of trusting in Christ! What signal blessings have been connected with it! Such, too, is the character of Christ, and such are the wonders he has performed for us, that we are warranted to place

walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him

unlimited confidence in the most extensive and kind declarations he has made. Let all his disciples learn how useful and how important it is to encourage the disposition of affectionate and unquestioning reliance on the Saviour. All their intercourse with persons who are distressed on account of their sinfulness, should be adapted to enlarge and elevate their views of the Saviour; and they should aim to *help* men, by judicious and attractive exhibitions of divine truth, to cast themselves on the grace and power of the Redeemer.

Let us *OBSERVE*, here, that the apostles were poor, indeed, so far as worldly property was concerned; but, however poor, they yet made many rich (2 Cor. 6:10) with blessings unspeakably greater than silver and gold. With true benevolence, they were always ready to do good to all men. Following their example, let us not crave the wealth and honor of this world, but the enduring blessings of the kingdom of God, and the happiness of doing good to all around us.

8. *And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, &c.* How natural that, in the excess of his joy and gratitude, he should thus employ his newly-bestowed power! || *Praising God.* His gratitude could not be repressed, but must vent itself in praise to him who had granted so great and so needed a blessing. It was God who had blessed him; and, in the fulness of his heart, he sought gratefully to acknowledge, in the presence of the worshippers, the goodness of that merciful Being. The sacred writer's graphic description almost makes the scene pass before our eyes. We almost see the man, in the excess of his joy, not only at first leaping forth from his lame condition, but afterwards alternately walking and leaping, variously

walking and praising God:

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which

trying his unaccustomed powers, and mingling with his activity expressions of praise to God.

OBSERVE, here, the lame man was directed to rise and walk. He did not wait to see whether any alteration had taken place in his limbs; he obeyed the direction, and found that ability to walk had been given him. So, as to our spiritual state, and in respect to all the commands of God, let us honestly and heartily obey God's revealed will. He will not fail to give us all needed strength. It is because we do not feel our necessities, and have not a disposition to trust in God, that we fail to receive his blessings. If we are sensible of our weakness, and will rely on the promise of Christ, we shall find, as did the apostle Paul (Phil. 4:13), that we can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth us.

10. *And they knew that it was he, &c.*; more literally, 'They knew, or recollect, him, that it was the man who used to be sitting for charity at the Beautiful gate.' The conduct of the man clearly showed that he was now perfectly healed, though a cripple but a moment before, so to speak.

11. *And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John;* that is, kept near to Peter and John, and often took hold of them. These apostles had been the instruments of the blessing which he had received, and he naturally held fast to them. He wished, too, that all should know to whom he was indebted for his recently obtained happiness. || *All the people ran together unto them.* A report of what had occurred would rap-

was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly

idly spread through the people collected together in the temple; and they would naturally hasten to the spot where the man was to be seen.

|| *In the porch that is called Solomon's.* The temple had various porches, or porticoes. One was called Solomon's, probably because it occupied the precise spot of the porch originally built by that king. It was believed, too, to stand on the very foundation which Solomon had laid.

12. *He answered.* The original word, thus translated, expresses the commencement of speaking, as well as a reply to a question. In the address which the apostle proceeded to deliver, his object was, to place before the minds of the people the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, that the blessings of the Messiah's reign were now offered to them, and that these blessings could be secured only by their repenting of their sins and becoming disciples of Jesus, whom they had rejected. He assured them, accordingly, that the miraculous cure of the lame man must not be traced to any personal power or piety of him and his associate, but to Jesus, whom God had signally honored, though they had denied his claim to be received as the Messiah. It was Jesus who had effected this cure, as a consequence of faith reposed in him. Since, now, Jesus was the Messiah, and the nation had rejected him, it was indispensable that they should repent, and renounce their hostility to Jesus. For, from Moses himself, it was evident that those who would not obey the Messiah should be sundered from his people, and excluded from the blessings of his reign. || *Why marvel ye at this?* why do you wonder at the cure which has

on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his Son

been performed for the lame man, as though it was an unaccountable event? Similar events had so often taken place in the lifetime of Jesus, and by his power, that there was little occasion for wondering how this cure had been effected. || *As though by our own power or holiness, &c.* The cure was not effected by any inherent power of the apostles, nor was it in honor of them, as being singularly holy, that it had been performed.

NOTICE, here, the humility of the apostles. They arrogated no honor to themselves. They were only instruments in the hand of God. It was the honor of Jesus, that was promoted by such miraculous works. The apostles were "willing to be forgotten and overlooked, that God might be remembered and owned."

13. *The God of Abraham, &c.* By this epithet, God revealed himself to Moses, when about to send him for the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. See Ex. 3: 6. The apostle wished, by a mention of the patriarchs, to revive in the minds of his hearers a recollection of the promise originally made to the forefathers concerning the Messiah, to connect the name of Jesus with the names of the patriarchs, whom the people so much honored, and thus, in the most solemn manner, to vindicate his Messiahship. It was the very God of the patriarchs, who had, at length, in fulfilment of his promises to them, put honor on Jesus of Nazareth. By the mention of the God of their patriarchs, the apostle showed, as Doddridge remarks, that it was not a wholly new religion which he taught, or one that would alienate them from the God of Israel. || *Hath glorified his Son*

Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a mur-

Jesus. God had put honor on Jesus, giving him the glorious distinction of being his Son, though the people had refused to acknowledge him, and had covered him with disgrace. This miraculous cure was in honor of him. || *Whom ye delivered up; to Pilate, the Roman governor (see John 18: 29, 30), or to death. John 19: 15.* || *Denied him in the presence of Pilate; rejected him, as unworthy of your reception and obedience.* So far from receiving him in his proper character, they sought to crucify him as an impostor and blasphemer. See Matt. 26: 65, 66. John 19: 7. || *When he was determined to let him go.* Pilate's own opinion was, that Jesus was wholly innocent, and that there was no just ground for condemning him to death. See Matt. 27: 18, 23. Luke 23: 4, 14, 15. John 18: 38. 19: 4. He therefore sought to have him acquitted and released. See Luke 23: 20, 22. John 19: 12. But the chief priests were so intent on the crucifixion of Jesus, that they overpowered Pilate by intimidating him, and forced from him his consent that Jesus should be crucified. See Matt. 27: 24. John 19: 12, 16.

14. *Desired a murderer to be granted unto you; desired the pardon and release of an acknowledged murderer.* When Pilate proposed to release Jesus, inasmuch as no accusation had been sustained against him, the people "cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas" (Luke 23: 18, 19); and then Pilate "released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will." Luke 23: 25. See also Mark 15: 7. Matt. 27: 16, 20, 21, 26. What a contrast! Ye rejected the holy and righteous Mes-

derer to be granted unto you ;

15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses.

16 And his name, through faith

in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know : yea, the faith which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

siah, and chose that even a murderer should be released from justice, and be let loose on society, rather than that Jesus should live, though the Roman governor saw clearly that his death would be unjust. — How deep was the humiliation to which the Lord Jesus submitted, and the guilt which at length accomplished his crucifixion !

15. *And killed the Prince of life.* Jesus was the Lord and Leader, by whom only men can attain eternal life. In Acts 5 : 31, he is called a Prince and Saviour ; and with much the same meaning, he is called in Heb. 2 : 10, the Captain of our salvation ; and in Heb. 12 : 2, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Compare Acts 4 : 12. So eminently is he the Author of salvation, or eternal life, to those who obey him, and Prince or Leader in the way to heaven, that he called himself, in John 14 : 6, the way, and the truth, and the life. Compare John 6 : 48—51. He is also the Author or Prince of life, as having been the first to rise from the dead, never more to die, and thus giving assurance of our resurrection. See John 11 : 25. In him, too, as in the Father, is a life-giving power (John 5 : 26) ; so that, as he is here contrasted with a murderer, he is represented by the apostle as the Author of our physical life. || *Whereof we are witnesses.* A similar declaration was made by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Compare 2 : 32. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead, according to his own prediction, was a fact of paramount importance, as proving him to be the Messiah. It was therefore repeatedly appealed to by the apostles, and was an argument which could not be refuted.

16. *And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong.* The idea, here conveyed, may probably be thus expressed — And, upon believing in him, he hath made this

man strong. The expression *his name* is sometimes of the same force as the single word *he*. In this passage, however, reference may be had to the fact, that the name of Jesus was solemnly pronounced over the lame man, as preparatory to his being healed ; and the power which, by divine appointment, accompanied the use of this name in such circumstances, by such men as Peter and John, and for such a purpose, was exercised ; so that it was *the name of Jesus* with which power was connected that had made the man sound in his limbs. The faith which was reposed in Jesus, and which was thus honored, was probably both that of the apostles and that of the lame man. A confidence in the Saviour's ability and willingness to bestow a blessing, is often mentioned as accompanying the reception of the blessing. See on v. 4 ; and besides the references there made, see Mark 5 : 34. 9 : 23. Acts 14 : 9. || *The faith which is by him* ; the faith which Jesus produces by his instructions respecting himself and God. He who believes in Jesus, confiding in his promises and his instructions, has also a true faith in God ; and so he who has faith in God, confides also in Jesus, whom the Father sent into the world. It is immaterial, therefore, whether we consider the apostle as meaning *faith in the Messiah* particularly, or *faith in God as made known* by the Messiah, and as performing his works by the Messiah. In either case, it was a faith which was produced by Jesus. It is “by him we believe in God, that raised him up from the dead” (1 Pet. 1 : 21) ; and it is by the manifestation of his character, and by his works, that we believe in himself, as the appointed Saviour. So the knowledge which the lame man had received concerning Jesus, and the encouragement which was given him.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

18 But those things which God

by the apostles, issued in his trusting to the power of Jesus for the blessing of health. || *This perfect soundness in the sight of you all.* Thus confidently did the apostle speak of the miraculous cure. It was an entire cure; it was evident to all the spectators. It was a case in which there was no room for doubting the reality of the cure.

17. *I wot; I know.* || *Through ignorance ye did it, &c.* The apostle wished to present the truth in respect to the guilty conduct of the Jews in crucifying Jesus, as mildly as faithfulness would allow, and even to make some apology for them. They were not aware, while seeking the death of the Lord Jesus, of the awful criminality of their conduct. They had settled it in their minds, that he must not be acknowledged as the Messiah, because he was so different from what they had expected the Messiah to be. Fixed in their view of him as an impostor, though they could not reply to his arguments, nor destroy the evidence of his miracles, they were bent on his destruction; and some of them, doubtless, ignorantly thought that a regard for God and religion demanded of them to persecute him even unto death. Even Jesus himself prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." See Luke 23: 34. The common people were instigated by the chief priests and rulers to clamor for the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27: 20); they were deluded and hurried on, and were not allowed by their rulers time for calm examination and reflection. Their passions were appealed to by the chief men; and, in a high state of excitement, they demanded the death of Jesus. Thus they proceeded in an ignorant manner, not knowing their Victim's freedom from the guilt which the priests charged on him, but, through their confidence in their rulers, regarding

before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

him as an impostor and blasphemer. Eminently ignorant were they of the true dignity of his person and character, and of the inexpressible criminality of thus proceeding against the Son of God. The rulers, too, had no just conception of the greatness of their guilt, however unable they were, in their sober moments, to show that Jesus deserved their rejection and hatred. They had no correct views of his character and purposes; and, impelled by their erroneous views, and displeased with the spiritual and holy aims of Jesus, and with the religious instructions which he had been imparting, they sought his death, not knowing that thereby they were sealing the truth of the prophetic scriptures. The ignorance, however, both of the people and of the rulers, could not excuse the deed; for it was connected with great guilt in not candidly weighing the evidences he furnished of being the Son of God, in disesteeming and hating his holy character, and in putting to death a person against whom no crime could be proved.

18. *Showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer.* The predictions of the Old Testament prophets foretold the sufferings of the Messiah. They did, indeed, more frequently speak of him as in a state of triumph and glory; and the prophetic representations which thus speak of him seem to have almost, if not quite, exclusively to have occupied the minds of the Jews. But some of the prophets expressly speak of his death; and some of his resurrection, implying, of course, a preceding death. See Ps. 16: 10, 11. 22: 15—18. Is. 53: 3—10. Dan. 9: 26. || *He hath so fulfilled.* These predictions God accomplished by permitting the gross darkness of ignorance and prejudice to cover the Jewish people and rulers, and by allowing them to pursue their own course,

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be

blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the

and, in the exercise of their voluntary ill-will towards Jesus, to put him to death. Compare 2: 23. Though his death was predicted, and formed a chief item in the plan by which the redemption of sinners was to be effected, yet his death was to be brought about in a most voluntary manner on the part of those who were to be engaged in it. They felt, during the transactions, that they were doing their own work, according to their own pleasure; and after the transactions, reflection could not but sting them to the quick for having been actuated by such dispositions. Their ignorance and ill-will completely blinded them to the true character and worth of the Lord Jesus; and thus they became voluntary agents in accomplishing the designs of God as to the death of Jesus. Had they had a just view of him, they would have shrunk from so foul a deed. The apostle Paul says (1 Cor. 2: 8), 'Had the rulers of this world known the real truth respecting Jesus, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'

REMARK. God has so constituted us, that, in all our moral conduct, we act with entire freedom of choice, and with an accountability that can never be removed. God's foreknowledge, or his determined plan, diminishes in no degree our voluntary sinful conduct. Nor is the guilt of sinful conduct at all diminished by God's overruling it for good. It is an interesting thought expressed by Dr. Campbell, that "God does not force the wills of his creatures; but he makes both their errors and their vices conduce to effect his wise and gracious purposes."

19. *Repent ye, therefore, and be converted.* These two forms of expression, *repent*, and *be converted*, may have substantially the same meaning; namely, that of forsaking the wrong course which the apostle's hearers

had pursued in reference to the Lord Jesus, and of turning to a right mode of viewing him and conducting towards him; that is, acknowledging him as the Messiah, and becoming his obedient followers. The word *repent* may, however, have specific reference to the inward change of views and feelings which was needed in regard to Jesus, and to the serious grief which would arise from such a change; while the direction, *be converted*, or, what is strictly equivalent to it, *turn ye*, may refer to the change of conduct which would follow the inward renovation. || *That your sins may be blotted out.* In 2: 38, Peter directed his hearers to repent for the remission, or forgiveness, of their sins. The same idea is conveyed in this verse. God is considered as keeping an account of men's conduct; and when, on their repentance, he forgives them, he may be said to have blotted out, or to have wiped off, the account. The Jews' rejection of the Lord Jesus, and all their sins, could be pardoned only in case they should abandon the course they had pursued, and become followers of Jesus, as the Messiah. To such an abandonment of their sins forgiveness would be granted, and all the blessings consequent on the Messiah's having established his reign, as Redeemer and Lord. To this latter thought, namely, the bliss which the Messiah was to bestow, the apostle proceeded more particularly to direct the attention of his hearers. || *When the times of refreshing shall come; or, more literally, so that times of refreshing may come;* times of repose from trouble, and of enjoyment. By this expression, we are to understand the *blissful times of the Messiah's reign*, the tranquillity and enjoyment which the Messiah would confer on his subjects. The Jews had endured great and sorrowful vicissitudes. Their history had been marked with a succession of sad reverses; and they were con-

presence of the Lord ;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you :

soling themselves that, in the days of the Messiah, they would have relief from their woes, and their sorrows would be turned to joy. The apostle encouraged his hearers, that times of refreshing, or of relief and true happiness, might now be enjoyed. To those who would repent and embrace Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Saviour, consolation and joy would be imparted, unspeakably superior to what they had been anticipating. A state of true and exalted bliss would be given them from the Lord.

20. *And he shall send Jesus Christ ;* or, more literally, *that he may send Jesus Christ.* Reference is had to the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven, which, the apostles were instructed, should hereafter take place for the purpose of consummating his reign, and bestowing the richest blessings on his people. To be prepared for this return of Jesus, and for entering on the perfected state of glory which will then be introduced, it would be necessary that their sins should be blotted out. Hence the need of repentance. || *Which before was preached unto you.* The ancient prophets had spoken of the Messiah. The same Messiah of whom the Jews had read in their Scriptures, was to return at the appointed time, to bless in a most eminent manner those who should become his people. — The best editions of the Greek Testament contain here, instead of the word rendered *preached*, a word which signifies *appointed*; so that the idea of the apostle may be thus expressed: *Who was before appointed for you ;* that is, who was of old appointed for your deliverance and salvation.

21. *Whom the heaven must receive.* It was a common opinion among the Jews, that the Messiah would continue on earth. On one occasion, they said to Jesus (John 12: 34),

21 Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy

“We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth forever.” Hence the short continuance of Jesus on earth would appear to many an insuperable objection to his being the Messiah. The apostle Peter here anticipates such an objection, and shows that it was by the divine will that Jesus was removed away from human sight, and taken up into heaven. The word *receive* has here the additional idea of *retaining*, or *holding*. The apostle represents the Messiah as having been, according to divine appointment, taken up into heaven, where he is, by the same appointment, to *remain* until a certain period fixed by the divine counsels. At that period, he is to return. So the angels, which presented themselves to the disciples, as Jesus was ascending to heaven (Acts 1: 10, 11), instructed them that he should ‘come in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven.’ And in the Epistle to the Hebrews (9: 28), we are told, that “to them that look for him shall Christ appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” In Revelation, also (1: 7), we are assured that “he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him.” || *Until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken, &c.* By the phrase *times of restitution of all things*, are meant the times of the Messiah; one of the purposes of whose coming was, to establish a new order of things among men, to establish anew in the human race, or to restore, the original purity and happiness of man. These times, in which general purity and happiness were to be established, and all things put into a good moral condition,—in other words, these times of the Messiah,—had been predicted by the Lord’s prophets in the Old Testament from the earliest times. The language of Scripture respecting the kingdom of God, or the reign of Christ, sometimes contemplates that reign in its commence-

prophets, since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things,

ment ; sometimes, in its progress on earth ; and sometimes, in its completed state, when the designs of God shall be fulfilled, and his people shall be established in their everlasting condition of holiness and glory. The apostle here appears to have had his mind fixed on the period of the consummation of the Messiah's reign, when he shall have put down all opposition, his enemies being placed under his feet. Then will be, indeed, times of quiet and happiness, and a final, unchanging restoration of holiness and bliss in the human family. Those who decline submission to him, will be awarded to their doom, while his people will be placed in complete and everlasting happiness. The fact that many of the human family will not come to the possession of holiness and happiness, is no valid objection to the propriety of the phrase, "restitution of all things." For, to borrow an illustration from an earthly government, if the subjects of some king were in rebellion, and measures were taken to effect a settlement of the difficulties by restoring the king's government and authority, those who continued rebellious would be condemned ; and yet, though many might have been put to death, and many might be confined in prisons, the state of order and happiness in the kingdom might be restored, and it would be proper to say, All things are now quiet and happy. Let us bear in mind, that, to possess this blissful state in the Messiah's kingdom, we must *repent* and *be converted to righteousness*. It will be of no avail to us, that such a state of glory exists, unless, by repentance here on earth, and by obedient faith in the Saviour, we have become his subjects, and qualified for heaven.

22. *For Moses truly said, &c.* As further enforcing the necessity of re-

whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets

penitance, and of becoming obedient followers of Jesus, the apostle reminds his hearers of a passage in the writings of Moses, in which that distinguished servant of the Lord and the giver of their law, had foretold the Messiah, and had warned of the doom which would follow a refusal to obey him. See Deut. 18: 18, 19.

|| *A Prophet.* The Messiah was to be eminently a prophet, a religious teacher, and revealer of God's will. He is thus spoken of in Is. 61: 1—3. It was a received opinion among the Jews, that the Messiah would be the greatest of all the prophets. It was with reference to this view, that the Jews, on a certain occasion, said (John 6: 14) respecting Jesus, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

|| *Of your brethren ; of your own nation, from among yourselves.* || *Like unto me.*

The principal points of similarity between Moses and Christ, here referred to, were, the appointment and the fitness of each to reveal the will of God, and to be a guide to the Lord's people. They were both lawgivers ; one, to the Israelites, who, as a nation, were placed in a peculiar relation to God ; the other, to the Christian church, and to the consciences of all men, wherever his gospel is made known. They were both mediators ; one, between God and the Israelites, in matters pertaining to their peculiar government ; the other, between God and the whole human family, in the great work of salvation. || *Him shall ye hear ; him it shall be your duty to obey.*

23. *Shall be destroyed from among the people.* Whoever should refuse obedience to this predicted Prophet, the Messiah, should have no place, nor portion, among the people of God. *To be cut off from the people, or to be*

from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 *Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant*

destroyed from among the people, was an expression indicative of the greatest punishment. Thus Moses had cautioned the nation ages before the Messiah had come. The Prophet had now made his appearance, and claimed the obedience of all hearts. Beware, says the apostle, lest you meet this doom, predicted by Moses himself, him whom you profess so highly to regard, and out of respect to whom you vindicate your rejection of Jesus. You can avoid this doom only by timely repentance, and obedience to Jesus of Nazareth, whom God has evidently set forth as the Messiah. The last clause of this verse presents somewhat different language from that which occurs in the passage in Deut. 18: 19, where we read, “Whoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” The idea, however, in the two passages, is the same.

24. *All the prophets from Samuel, &c.* Samuel was generally spoken of, among the Jews, as first in the series of prophets after Moses. The passages in the books of Samuel, to which the apostle would be here understood as referring, are in 2 Sam. 7: 16, 25, 29. Not only Moses, but the prophets in general from Samuel downwards to Malachi, had predicted the Messiah’s times. Their predictions had various degrees of clearness and directness; but from the general current of prophecy, the Jews regarded it as an established point of doctrine, that a new state of things was to be introduced by the Messiah — a state of glory and happiness.

25. *Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant.* The word *children* is often used, in the Scriptures, to express a peculiar relation to the persons, or things, spoken of. Thus *children of the prophets* may mean *those to whom the prophets*

which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 *Unto you first, God having*

eminently belonged, as being of the same nation, and as having given instruction to that nation; *children of the covenant* may mean *those to whom the covenant belongs*, or *for whom its promised blessings were designed*. The apostle’s hearers claimed kindred with the ancient prophets, and a special interest in the covenant which God had made with their forefathers. They were descendants of those to whom the prophets spoke, and with whom the covenant was made; and both prophets and covenant belonged to the nation of which they were a part. The apostle, therefore, expressed the idea, The prophets who have foretold the Messiah’s days, and the covenant which promised such blessings through him, belong to you. How affecting an argument ought this to have been to the Jews, leading them to acknowledge and obey Jesus, that it was to *him* their ancient prophets, and the covenant which God had made with their father Abraham, had reference! If they refused to admit the claims of Jesus, they would thereby separate themselves from those forefathers and from that covenant, and thus be cut off from the Lord’s people. And how sad, should all the hopes, which ancient prophecy had taught them to cherish, by their rejection of Jesus terminate in despair!

|| *The covenant which God made with our fathers*; the engagement into which God entered, and the promise which he made to the early ancestors of our nation, particularly the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

|| *Saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed, &c.* For the original promise to Abraham, which is here quoted, see Gen. 22: 18. Compare also Gen. 12: 3. By the seed of Abraham, we are to understand his posterity; and eminently that one descendant according to the flesh, the Messiah, by whose religion and scheme of re-

raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

demption the world was to be blessed. See Gal. 3: 16. According to promise, the posterity of Abraham has been a distinguished blessing to the world, and will become such to all the families of the earth, by the fact that so many prophets and pious men were raised up from among his descendants, and that a knowledge of the true religion was imparted to his posterity, and preserved among them; particularly by the fact that the Messiah descended, according to the human nature, from Abraham.

26. *Unto you*; you, who now compose the Jewish family, and “whose (Rom. 9: 4, 5) are the fathers and the covenants.” || *First*. To the Jews the blessings of the gospel were, in the first instance, proposed. Such was the order which God had mercifully appointed. It was to the Jews that the Messiah came, as to his own people, or inheritance (John 1: 11), who ought to have welcomed him. During his public ministry, it was among them that he exercised his office, and sent forth his apostles. “Go not,” said he to the twelve (Matt. 10: 5, 6), “into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” After his ascension, the gospel was first preached to the Jews, according to his direction. For in Luke 24: 47, while directing his apostles to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, he specially enjoined on them to *begin at Jerusalem*. At the time of Peter’s address in this chapter, the gospel had not yet been introduced among the Gentiles. God showed his compassionate regard for the Jews, by distinctly and fully proposing to them the blessings of the Messiah’s dispensation, before they were presented to other nations. || *Having raised up his Son Jesus*. The term *raised up* is here used in the same sense as in the 22d verse; where it

CHAPTER IV.

1 The rulers of the Jews, offended with Peter’s sermon, 4 (though thousands of the

means, *having caused him to appear*, and relates, not to the Saviour’s being raised up from the dead, but to his coming into the world. By sending the Messiah, God fulfilled his promise to the patriarchs and their descendants.

|| *Sent him to bless you, &c.* It had been promised that men should be *blessed* by the Messiah. The blessing was now proposed to the people, and it was to consist in their being turned from sin, and being forgiven, and in their receiving those holy influences which would impart and nourish spiritual life, and fit them for heaven. Such was the purpose for which the Messiah came. The apostle does not intimate that such a blessing would be actually enjoyed by every one. On the contrary, the Messiah’s blessings were not to be forced on them against their will; they would be bestowed on those who earnestly desired them, and who received in an obedient manner the exhortation which had previously been given (v. 19), “Repent ye, and be converted.”

|| *Every one of you*. Religion must be felt as a personal concern. Each one, the apostle would suggest, was a sinner; and no one could be truly blessed by the Messiah but by being personally turned to righteousness.

— Let us apply the apostle’s thoughts to ourselves; for we personally need the blessings of redemption through Christ. To us has the gospel been published from our earliest years. We have heard its warning voice, bidding us turn from all our iniquities. We have heard its inviting voice, directing us to trust in the Saviour and become his obedient followers. We have heard its promises of eternal life to all who obey. O, how sad, if we at length be not found among the saved people of God!

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter continues the narrative that was commenced in the third, and relates some of the consequences

people were converted that heard the word,) imprison him and John. 5 After, upon examination Peter boldly avouching the lame man to be healed by the name of Jesus, and that by the same Jesus only we must be eternally saved, 13 they command him and John to preach no more in that name, adding also threatening, 23 whereupon the church felleth to prayer. 31 And God, by moving the place where they were assembled, testified that he heard their prayer; confirming the church with the gift of the Holy Ghost, and with mutual love and charity.

which resulted from the cure of the lame man.

1. *And as they spake, &c.*; while the apostles, Peter and John, were engaged in speaking to the people. || *The captain of the temple.* So extensive was the temple, and so numerous and costly were the articles that were laid up there, that a guard was necessary for its protection. There was, consequently, a guard maintained in and around the temple, consisting of priests and Levites; the priests keeping watch in three places; the Levites, in twenty-one. The *captain of the temple* was the one who had command of this guard, and a part of whose duties it was to prevent tumults in the temple. It appears from Luke 22: 4, that there were several captains of the temple. Probably this name was given to those who were placed over the separate companies of the guard; while over the whole was one, as a kind of chief captain, here spoken of. || *The Sadducees.* This name was given to one of the sects among the Jews. They differed from the Pharisees and the great body of the Jews, as we learn from Matt. 22: 23, and Acts 23: 8, by denying the existence of angels and disembodied spirits, and the resurrection of the dead. The priests, doubtless, originated the opposition against the apostles, which is related in this chapter. They were incensed that such men as Peter and John should come forward into the most public place as religious teachers, and should be attracting to themselves and the cause of Jesus so much attention and re-

ND as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

2 *Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*

3 *And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now even-tide.*

spect from the people. The captain of the temple was influenced, or professed to be influenced, probably, by the fear that a tumult would arise in the temple. The Sadducees were aroused to opposition, because their favorite doctrine about the non-existence of departed human spirits would be effectually destroyed by the apostles' proving and maintaining the resurrection of Jesus. || *Came upon them;* came up to them violently to prevent their further addressing the people, and to apprehend them for examination before the Jewish authorities.

2. *Being grieved; being filled with indignation.* Their indignation was excited by the bold position which the apostles had taken, and the plainness and earnestness with which they vindicated the Saviour's cause. The stand which the apostles had taken, was in direct opposition to the views and wishes of the public authorities.

|| *That they taught the people.* The apostles would be regarded as arrogating to themselves the right to teach the people; they would, then, incur the frowns of the rulers. || *The resurrection from the dead.* As the apostles so clearly and earnestly testified the resurrection of Jesus, the Sadducees would readily combine against them. By the case of Jesus, the doctrine of the resurrection was established, in opposition to their dogma.

3. *Put them in hold; put them in prison for safe keeping.* || *Even-tide; evening.* The syllable *tide* was formerly added to certain words, and

4 Howbeit, many of them which heard the word, believed ; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the

means *time* or *season*. It was at three o'clock in the afternoon (see 3: 1), that Peter and John went up to the temple. As courts were held and causes tried, among the Jews, in the morning, it was of course too late in the day for the Jewish sanhedrim to be assembled to examine the apostles.

4. *Many of them which heard the word believed*; many of those who had heard Peter's address (3: 12—26), became believers in Jesus. || *The number of the men was about five thousand.* It is generally agreed that this number is not stated as additional to the three thousand mentioned in 2: 41. The meaning is, that the number of believers had now become about five thousand. How early it became evident that the kingdom of Christ was to be an increasing kingdom ! His doctrine was like leaven. He went forth conquering and to conquer. See Rev. 6: 2.

5. *Their rulers*; the chief men of the Jewish people. This term may also mean the members of the sanhedrim in general ; while the following words, *elders and scribes*, express particular classes represented in that body. The Jews were, at that time, under the dominion of the Romans ; but the Roman authorities still allowed them to enjoy their religious customs and privileges, and to continue their internal regulations. The members of the sanhedrim, or great council (v. 15), which still continued its operations, were now summoned together for the trial of the two apostles. The sanhedrim was a tribunal composed of seventy-two members. The Jewish high priest acted as president ; on his right hand sat the vice-president, and on his left the second vice-president. The court was composed of chief priests (that is, persons who had previously been high priests, or

morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the

who had been heads of the twenty-four classes of priests), of elders, and of scribes, who had been chosen to a seat. Appeals and other matters of special importance were brought for examination and trial before this body. || *Elders.* These were men of age and experience, whose weight of character had procured for them admission into the sanhedrim.

|| *Scribes.* The scribes were a class of men devoted to the study and explaining of the Jewish law, as found in the books of Moses, and in the traditions which had been handed down from ancient times. From the nature of their pursuits, a good proportion of the members of the sanhedrim would be taken from their class.

6. *Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas.* Caiaphas was, in reality, the high priest at this time, as also before the crucifixion of Jesus (see John 11: 49), and continued in the office some time longer. Annas was his father-in-law, and had also been high priest. By virtue of his formerly holding the office, and of his relationship to Caiaphas, he still retained great influence. It is also thought probable, by some, that he was, at the period here referred to, an assistant, or deputy, to Caiaphas, or second high priest. The official name was, therefore, still applied to him ; and on account of his greater age, of his relation to Caiaphas, and the respect which Caiaphas paid to him, it became usual to name him first. Thus it is said in the Gospel of Luke (3: 2), Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests, when the word of God came to John the Baptist ; and in John 18: 13, we read that Jesus, after having been seized, was carried to Annas first, though Caiaphas was the real high priest. || *And John and Alexander.* No particular account has reached us of these men.

kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye

They had, probably, held some official stations, and were still men of note, and members of the sanhedrim. || *As many as were of the kindred of the high priest*; persons belonging to the sanhedrim, who sustained a family relation to Annas and Caiaphas. The apostles were thus summoned before men who, not only by their official capacity, might be unfriendly to them, but also, by their family feelings towards the high priest, would be ready to sanction summary and violent proceedings. With such a man as Caiaphas for the president of the council,—the man who so strenuously insisted on taking the life of Jesus (John 11: 50), and who was so active in instigating the people to demand his death, and with a body of counsellors naturally subservient to his wishes,—what had the apostles to hope for, so far as man's judgment was concerned?

7. *By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?* The question related to the cure of the lame man, mentioned in the preceding chapter. The Jewish authorities did not pretend to deny the fact which had taken place, or to deny its being a very wonderful fact. But they demanded, How, by what power, was it done? or, By whose aid was it done? The belief was common among the Jews, that wonderful works, and even miracles, could be performed by magic art, or by some peculiar skill in medicine, and by invoking the names of angels, or of distinguished men, such as Solomon and the patriarchs. An instance of men who acted on this superstitious notion we find, probably, in the exorcists spoken of in Acts 19: 13. It was supposed that supernatural aid was thus procured. Hence the in-

rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that

quiry, By what power was this cure effected? Was it by some peculiar medical, or magical, skill? Or, by what name was it done? On whose aid, accompanying the invocation of his name, did you rely for performing the cure? By whom, in short, was it performed? The Jewish court probably wished to entangle the apostles, or to intimidate them. But their questions were of such a nature as gave the apostles a most favorable opportunity for advocating the cause of their Master. They readily embraced the occasion for bearing testimony to his authority and power.

8. *Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost.* As on the day of Pentecost (2: 4), so now, Peter was abundantly favored with the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Saviour had promised (see Luke 24: 49) that the apostles should be endued with power from on high (see also Acts 1: 8); and accordingly God granted special aid to Peter on this occasion. The circumstances might naturally excite fear; but the Holy Spirit elevated the apostle above the fear of man, and enabled him to bear faithful testimony before the rulers, as well as before the common people.

9. *Of the good deed.* The apostle thus disclaims all charge of guilt. He and his associate were arraigned not for a crime, but for a deed of benevolence to a poor lame man. || *The impotent man*; the man who, before his cure, had not power to walk. || *By what means*; more literally, *by whom*. Reference was thus made to the inquiry, By what name? an inquiry very similar to the question, By whom? or, By whose aid?

10. *By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, &c.* Keeping in view the inquiry, By what name have ye done

by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

this? the apostle declared explicitly that the cure was wrought by the name of Jesus Christ, that is, by Jesus Christ. The apostles were only instruments in his hands; the power of healing was his. To make the reply still more definite, and most clearly to point out the Lord Jesus, Peter added the epithet *of Nazareth*, and the circumstance that the Jewish rulers had crucified him, and that God had raised him up from the dead in attestation of his being the Messiah. At the mention of Nazareth, the question would very naturally occur to such men as now composed the sanhedrim, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John 1:46. But, however discreditable in the view of some it might be to have been brought up in Nazareth, and to have been crucified, yet it was peculiarly necessary to keep in view the humbling circumstances of Jesus, as to his abode and his death, as well as the glory of his real character, and of his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, that those who were called on to believe might make no mistake, and might be fully tested. It required deep humility, especially in the great men of the nation, to acknowledge as the Messiah a Nazarene who had been crucified. But if they had not sufficient humility to accept, as their Messiah and Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth, and to abase themselves as having been unspeakably guilty for rejecting and crucifying him, they could have no part, nor lot, in the divine kingdom.

It is an unalterable condition to the enjoyment of the Messiah's blessings, that we be converted from pride and vainglory, and become as little children. Matt. 18:3. How evidently does God show us, in the humiliation of Jesus, as viewed in man's ordinary way of judging, that he

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 Neither is there salvation in

chooses the base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence! 1 Cor. 1:28, 29.

11. *This is the stone, &c.* The apostle here quotes the substance of a passage of Scripture, found in Ps. 118:22—"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." This passage our Lord had applied to himself, in an address to the chief priests and elders of the Jews. See Matt. 21:42. The apostle Peter on this occasion also applies it to Jesus, and thus represents him as a stone which had been thought worthless, and had been thrown aside, but which had, at length, been placed in the conspicuous and honorable position of the chief corner-stone in a splendid edifice. || *Which was set at nought of you builders.*

The members of the sanhedrim, being the chief men of the Jewish nation, intrusted with the management of its most important affairs, and by whom it was to be expected, from their office and position in society, that the spiritual interests of the people would be promoted, are here compared to the builders of an edifice. As those who have the charge of erecting an edifice, ought to have discernment to discover the qualities of the materials which are designed to be employed, and especially to put the most suitable stone in the most conspicuous and honorable position, so ought the heads of the Jewish nation to have perceived and acknowledged the just claims of Jesus to be received as their Messiah. They had, however, regarded him as unworthy of their acceptance, and had accordingly rejected him; treating him as builders would treat a stone which they considered unfit to occupy a place in the building they

any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

were erecting. || *Which is become the head of the corner.* The stone, thus considered as worthless, and thrown aside as unfit for use, was, however, at length rescued from reproach, and became the chief corner-stone, the top-stone of the corner, occupying a place not only most important as sustaining the building, but also most conspicuous. So Jesus, though he had been utterly rejected by the chief men of the nation, and treated as a worthless and vile pretender, was yet proved to be the Lord's anointed, the Messiah; he was the corner-stone of God's spiritual temple. The apostle Peter, in his first Epistle (2: 6), applies also a similar passage to the Lord Jesus — “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious.” Is. 28: 16.

12. The apostle had distinctly replied to the inquiry proposed by the sanhedrim, and affirmed that the cure of the lame man proceeded from Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had raised up from the dead. He had also shown, in most expressive language, that this Jesus, however rejected by them, was honored of God, and was the true Messiah. He now advances a step farther, and affirms that in no other person than this same Jesus does the power reside of bestowing on men *salvation*, or that deliverance from the sins and troubles of the present state, and that spiritual and eternal bliss, which is to be enjoyed in the Messiah's kingdom. — *Neither is there salvation in any other.* The word *salvation* refers here to the enjoyment of that state of exalted bliss, which the Messiah, in his capacity of Redeemer, or Saviour, was to bestow. He was to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1: 21), and was to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Acts 5: 31. In this sense, the term *Saviour* was often used in reference to him. See Luke 2: 11. John 4: 42. Acts 13: 23. It was only through Jesus, that this

13. Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearn-

salvation could be obtained; for he was the true Messiah. Hence, on the occasion of healing the lame man, and on the day of Pentecost, the apostle had urged the necessity of repentance, and of receiving Jesus, in order that the forgiveness of sins, and all the blessings of the Messiah's reign, might be obtained. See 3: 19. 2: 38. || *For there is none other name under heaven, &c.* The apostle dwelt on the thought expressed in the preceding clause, and still more emphatically insisted on it. There is, he affirmed, no other person, and no other is to be expected, by whom we can be saved. Jesus of Nazareth was so clearly proved by the acts of his life, by his resurrection from the dead, and the bestowment of the Spirit's influences, to be the long-promised deliverer, that it was to him only men were to look for salvation. No other Saviour could be hereafter expected.—The truth, which the apostle asserted before the Jewish sanhedrim, is applicable to us, and will hold good to the end of time. It is by a heartfelt trust in Jesus as a Redeemer, and a cordial obedience to him as our Lord, that the blessings of eternal life will become ours. Dependence on any other method of salvation will deceive us. Hope placed on our own merits, or on any thing but the Saviour's plan of mercy, will prove delusive.

13. *When they saw the boldness of Peter and John.* So far from being intimidated or awed into silence, by being brought before the chief court of the nation, Peter and John were able to maintain a complete self-possession, and to express themselves with much freedom and earnestness of speech. Their *boldness* was not the boldness of contempt or of arrogance, but a calm confidence, which resulted from a consciousness of being in the right, and from the assistance with which their Lord strengthened them. He had directed his

ed and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

apostles that, when brought before councils and other authorities, they should take no thought how, or what, they should speak, for it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak, and the Spirit of their Father would speak in them. See Matt. 10: 19, 20. The apostles were endued with power from on high (Acts 1: 8. Luke 24: 49), and, in the most appalling circumstances, were enabled to bear a decided and faithful testimony for their Master's cause. || *They were unlearned and ignorant men.* Peter and John were not learned, in the general sense of that term, nor had they been educated in the schools of the rabbis, or doctors of the Jewish law. They were, therefore, regarded by the dignitaries of the nation as untaught men. The learning cultivated among the Jews consisted mostly in a knowledge of their Scriptures, and of the religious traditions which had been handed down from former ages. The original word, here rendered *ignorant*, seems to refer to the rank in society which the two apostles held, as contrasted with that to which the members of the sanhedrim belonged. They were men, in private or ordinary life, of the class which the distinguished men of the nation would denominate the *lower* class. In the usual way of estimating men, they would be regarded as untaught and uncultivated. || *They marvelled.* These apostles, belonging to the more private and obscure walks of life, might have been expected to be somewhat disconcerted, and to lose their presence of mind, when brought before the chief dignitaries of the nation. Hence their unappalled and dignified appearance excited surprise. They had had a better teacher, however, and now had a better inward monitor, than their haughty opposers. They were qualified, by the instructions of Christ and the in-

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

spiration of the Holy Spirit, to be guides to all, even to priests and Pharisees, in respect to the Messiah's dispensation. The surprise which the members of the sanhedrim felt, arose, also, from the manifestation of religious knowledge which the two apostles had made; and was of a similar character to that which the Jews expressed in regard to Jesus himself, when they said (John 7: 15), "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" —How often, alas, does it appear that men in eminent repute for learning and station, are profoundly ignorant as to the way of salvation! God chooses "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Cor. 1: 26—29); and while, on account of the pride of the human heart, he hides spiritual things "from the wise and prudent, he reveals them unto babes." Matt. 11: 25—27. || *They took knowledge of them, &c.*; they recollect them, as men who had been very intimate with Jesus, as his constant adherents and personal attendants. Some of these rulers had often seen Peter and John with Jesus; for the chief men, priests, and Pharisees, often had interviews with him, and engaged in disputes with him. And now they recollect having often seen Peter and John with him.

14. *They could say nothing against it.* The fact that the man, now present, had for a long time been a cripple (v. 22), and that he had been healed, could not be denied (v. 16); for he was now standing on his feet, in company with the two apostles, instead of being laid at the temple-gate. Nor could they discover any ground for charging falsehood, or fraud, on the apostles. The apostles had made an unvarnished statement as to the author of the cure, in answer to their inquiry; and it was not possible for them to bring up any thing in op-

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further

position to that statement. Gladly would they have done so, if they could; because, knowing the two apostles to have been most intimately associated with Jesus, they saw that the recent fact connected itself with all the preceding facts in bearing favorable testimony to the cause of Jesus. The Jewish rulers had, however, rejected and crucified Jesus, and still held themselves in decided opposition to his claim of being the Messiah. But, though they so strenuously opposed him and his cause, and were vexed at the increase of his disciples, yet they were not able to say a word against the miraculous cure which had been performed in his name.

15. *When they had commanded them to go aside out of the council.* When the apostles had been sufficiently examined, they were directed to withdraw, for a while, from the room where the sanhedrim was assembled. This order was given so that the members of the council might have an opportunity privately to express their views, and come to some decision.

16. *A notable miracle; a known and incontrovertible miracle.*

17. *That it spread no further;* that knowledge of this miracle spread no further. It was already known throughout Jerusalem; but the members of the court were desirous to keep it from being circulated through the country. || *Let us straitly threaten them;* let us threaten them with severe punishment, if they continue to maintain the cause of Jesus. || *That they speak henceforth to no*

among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to

man in this name. The words *this name* refer here to Jesus Christ, to whom the apostles had been bearing testimony, both before the people and before the sanhedrim. The desire of the sanhedrim was, that the apostles should henceforth keep silence concerning Jesus, hoping that thus the excitement which had been created would be hushed, and that the cause of Jesus would come to an end. They would gladly, doubtless, in their exasperated state of mind, have sent the apostles back to prison, and there detained them a long time, or have subjected them, as they afterwards did, to the indignity of a public scourging (5: 40). But the fact of "the good deed done to the" cripple was so recent, and was so extensively known, and the apostles had attained so much favor among the people (v. 21), that the sanhedrim could not but fear that a public tumult would be the consequence of any such measures. They therefore concluded to enjoin on the apostles entire silence, in public and in private, concerning Jesus, and severely to threaten a disregard of this injunction. But how useless it was to attempt to stay the progress of the Saviour's cause! How clearly is it the part of wisdom, as well as of duty, always to yield to the truth, though it be against our long-cherished views! We cannot crush the truth, nor can we long conceal it. The leaven must operate.

18. *In the name of Jesus; concerning Jesus; or, rather, as acting on the authority of Jesus.*

19. *Whether it be right in the sight*

hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So, when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might

of God. It was to God that these apostles felt themselves accountable in reference to the matters on which the rulers had so strictly forbidden them to speak. God was to be their judge, not men. The rulers were transcending their authority, and interfering in a manner which God and conscience could not approve. || *More than unto God.* It was in obedience to God, that they were maintaining the cause of Jesus. It was God, who had appointed them to testify of Jesus (Acts 10: 41); and it was by the Holy Spirit, that they were qualified and impelled to act as his apostles. Acts 1: 8. 2: 4, 33. Jesus, their Lord and Saviour, whom they knew to be the Messiah, had selected them to be his apostles and special witnesses. Acts 1: 8. Such being the facts in the case, they could have no doubt what course to take in regard to the prohibition. || *Judge ye.* Their adversaries themselves being judges, a decision might easily be made as to the path of duty. The sanhedrim had no right to expect of them, in their circumstances, that they should regard the prohibition, with however severe penalties the rulers might seek to enforce it.

Our duty to God should be our first consideration. Let us seek, by all the methods he has given us, to know his will. There is danger, as the history of some truly pious persons shows, of dignifying our private impressions, or even our desires, into a sense of duty to God. The apostles were, on this occasion, in no such danger.

20. *For we cannot but speak the things, &c.* The facts, which the apostles certainly knew as to the life, works, death, resurrection, and as-

punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and report-

cension, of Jesus, and the instructions which they had heard from his lips, they could not — such was their importance, and their bearing on the glory of God and the welfare of men — bury in their own breasts. These things, the apostles may be considered as saying, we *must* make known. Truth demands this of us. The Messiahship of Jesus must be announced and vindicated. The command of God to us, as appointed witnesses of Jesus, requires us, on every proper occasion, to bear testimony for him. And a concern for the salvation of men (v. 12) will not allow us to be silent. The facts were of such a nature, and such was the commission with which they had been divinely charged, that not a moment's doubt could exist in their minds, whether or not to regard the sanhedrim's prohibition.

21. *Because of the people.* Violent treatment of the apostles might have excited a tumult among the people against the Jewish authorities; for the events which had occurred had taken a strong hold on the public mind, and attracted the people's favor towards the apostles. || *For all men glorified God for that which was done.* The people in general acknowledged the interposition of God in the healing of the lame man, and spoke of it in terms of admiration and praise to God.

22. *For the man was above forty years old;* and had, therefore, been universally known as a cripple. He was now universally known as enjoying the use of his limbs by a miracle performed in the name of Jesus.

23. *They went to their own company;* to their fellow-Christians. The followers of Christ were in the habit

ed all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did

of daily assembling together (2: 44, 46); and doubtless the imprisonment of Peter and John proved an additional reason for their coming together to offer prayer. It would seem, from the following verse, that the Christian company were assembled together; and as the two apostles knew the usual place of meeting, they at once repaired thither, and gave intelligence of the treatment they had received, and of the prohibition which the sanhedrim had laid on them.

24. *They lifted up their voice to God with one accord;* with united hearts they joined in the prayer which one of their company offered. || *Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, &c.* This form of address to God, as the Creator of the universe, seems to be quoted from Ps. 146: 6. Such an acknowledgment of God as the universal Creator, must have had a happy effect in soothing any agitation of spirit which the Christians might have felt in their present trying circumstances. He who made all men could easily control human rage, or prevent the natural effects of angry opposition to his cause. He could also sustain his own servants, and enable them to act a worthy part when exposed to peril.

25. *Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said.* The remaining words of this verse and the whole of the following are quoted from the language of David in Ps. 2: 1, 2—language peculiarly applicable to the circumstances in which the Christian company then were. || *Rage;* that is, cherish angry feelings, and act with violent opposition. || *Imagine vain things;* purpose to accomplish things

the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the

which it would be utterly vain for them to attempt.

26. *The kings of the earth.* The word *kings* is here used in the general sense of *rulers* in high authority. || *His Christ.* In the psalm from which the quotation is made, we read, *Against the Lord and against his Anointed.* The rendering in the psalm is a preferable one. The word *Christ* is here used not as a proper name, but as a title of office, and means the Lord's *anointed one*—him whom the Lord had sent forth as his appointed Messiah. As the ceremony of anointing was anciently used among the Jews in introducing *kings* (at least the first in a line of kings) and high priests into their office, the word *anointed* was descriptive of a person who had been appointed to such an office, and established in it. It was, therefore, eminently applicable to the promised and expected king of the Lord's people. He was peculiarly the Lord's *anointed one*.

27. The language of David having been repeated, the application of it to the case of the Lord Jesus and of his people was next remarked. *Whom thou hast anointed.* The word *Messiah* and the word *Christ* both mean *anointed one*. To speak, then, of Jesus as having been anointed of God, is the same as to call him the *Messiah*; and the expression *whom thou hast anointed*, is the same in meaning as *whom thou hast appointed as the Messiah*. The resemblance between the idea conveyed in these words of the prayer and the words of the psalm which are quoted in the preceding verse, will appear by slightly altering the word *Christ* in the 26th verse, in

people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

accordance with the explanation just given of that word, and with the manner of translating in the second psalm, thus — “the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed one. For of a truth, against thy holy Son Jesus, whom thou hast anointed,” &c. || *Herod.* It is Herod Antipas who is here meant. At the time of John the Baptist’s beginning to preach and to announce the Messiah, and at the time when Jesus entered on his public work, this Herod was tetrarch of Galilee. Luke 3:1. He also bore the title of king. Matt. 14:9. Mark 6:14. It was he who was in Jerusalem, at the time our Lord was undergoing his pretended trial, to whom also Pilate sent him (Luke 23:7), and by whom he was most contumuously treated. Luke 23:11. || *Pontius Pilate;* the Roman governor, or procurator, of Judea, at the time of our Lord’s trial and crucifixion. His consent, which he at length gave (Matt. 27:26), was necessary in order that the wishes of the Jews for the crucifixion might be carried into effect. The authorities of the Jewish nation had already condemned Jesus, and then sought Pilate’s consent to his being put to death. Thus kings and rulers stood up together against him, and jointly assented to his death. || *With the Gentiles and the people of Israel.* In the psalm which had been quoted, mention is made of *the heathen* and *the people.* The word *heathen* is equivalent to the word *Gentiles*; the same word in the original psalm being translated either *heathen* or *Gentiles.* The Roman soldiers were Gentiles; these and the Jewish people came together and united in the crucifixion of Jesus.

28. *For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined, &c.* The hand is often figuratively used in Scripture as expressive of power, and

7*

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thy

conveys the idea of an *act of power.* The word *counsel* is similar in meaning to the word *will* or *design.* When united as in this verse, the two words may signify *powerful will.* The idea conveyed by this text, in connection with the preceding, is, that the enemies of Jesus conspired together so as to carry into effect what the will of God had before determined should take place. The sentiment is the same as is conveyed in Acts 2:23, and 3:18. The language here used is indicative of the certainty that the purposes of God will be effected. The events which had taken place in respect to Jesus, had been foreseen and foretold by the Lord. It was a part of the divine arrangement, that the Messiah, as the Redeemer of men and Head of the new dispensation, should be despised and rejected, should endure a violent and unjust death, and pour out his soul as an offering for sin. Is. 53:10. All the hostility which was shown against Jesus, and the successful efforts to compass his death, were the means by which this arrangement was fulfilled. The actors in this dreadful tragedy had no design to fulfil prophecy; they only acted out the will of their own hearts, and were unspeakably guilty, as being wholly voluntary in their determinations and their conduct. God permitted them thus to proceed, interposing no insuperable obstacles. And while the Jews thought that, by compassing his death, they should effectually prevent him from being acknowledged as the Messiah, his very death was made the occasion of his being fully known as the Lord’s anointed one; his very death was a fulfilment of prophecy, and was necessary to his resurrection from the dead, by which latter event additional prophecies were fulfilled.

29. *Behold their threatenings; look*

hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word

at and frown upon their threats, making them entirely powerless.

30. *By stretching forth thy hand to heal;* by exerting thy power in miraculously healing the sick and the lame; in allusion to the healing of the lame man, which had been followed by such remarkable results. || *And that signs and wonders, &c.* Miracles, accompanying the apostles' teaching, as attestations from God, would greatly embolden them and their fellow-Christians in their work of vindicating the claims of Jesus, and urging men to believe in him. || *By the name of thy holy child Jesus;* by thy holy Son Jesus, or by power accompanying the invocation of his name. The name of Jesus being called upon in the performance of miracles, those wonderful displays of power would be traced to him, and would show forth his glory.

It is well to notice, here, 1. How readily pious men betake themselves to prayer for divine assistance, particularly in trying circumstances! 2. How encouraging to Christians is the society of their brethren, and how strengthening is union in prayer! 3. How utterly vain does this prayer show opposition to the cause of Christ to be!

31. *The place was shaken, &c.* There was an external indication of the presence and the approval of God. So, on the day of Pentecost (2: 2), there was an outward indication, addressed to the senses of the people, that the special presence of God was granted to the disciples. This outward token of the Holy Spirit's presence, ready to give all needed aid, was at once understood by the disciples; and they rejoiced anew in the cheering and strengthen-

of God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave

ing influence which was thus imparted. || *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* Compare v. 8, and 2: 4. || *And they spake the word of God with boldness.* Strengthened anew by the Spirit's influences, they rose above the fear of the rulers' threats; and with continued boldness they bore testimony for the Saviour. Not only on the occasion when they had offered prayer, and perceived the evidences of the divine presence, did they express themselves to one another freely and without fear, but also on following occasions, public as well as private. The threats of the rulers had no unfavorable effect on them; but, disregarding the unrighteous and presumptuous prohibition, they still persisted, with all freedom, to speak of their Lord on every proper occasion.

32. *The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.* The followers of Christ were united to one another by a most ardent love, and lived in entire concord with one another. The whole body of the believers seemed animated by one spirit. They were many in number, but one in heart.

|| *Neither said any of them, that aught of the things, &c.* Those of them who owned property, regarded it not as intended for their personal welfare, so much as for the good of the company; and were, therefore, ready to use it for the relief of their brethren, or to convert it into money, that the necessities of all might be supplied.

|| *They had all things common.* See on 2: 44. They had all things common, so far as the necessities of any might require, while yet some of them still retained their right of possession.

33. *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection,*

the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands

&c. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the great fact which it was then necessary to urge on the attention of the people; for that fact was an essential and most striking proof that he was the Messiah, and that his cause was the cause of God. Ancient prophecy had foretold that the Messiah should arise from the dead (2: 25—31), and Jesus had foretold his resurrection as a proof of his being the Messiah. Matt. 12: 40. 17: 22, 23. The apostles had repeatedly seen him since his resurrection. And the same testimony which proved his resurrection, affirmed also his ascension to heaven; and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which had recently taken place, and the miracle which had been performed, confirmed the fact of his now being at the right hand of God. Thus important in itself, and thus connected with other important facts, was the resurrection of Jesus. It clearly refuted the doctrine of the Sadducees, who disbelieved a resurrection of the dead; and it proved, against them, and the Pharisees, and all the unbelieving Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. To this fact the apostles testified *with great power*; that is, with much earnestness and to great effect. They spoke as men who knew what they declared to be true, and who felt it to be vitally important to the souls of their hearers; and as men who were specially aided by the Holy Spirit. || *Great grace was upon them all.* The original word here translated *grace* is the same as answers to the word *favor* in 2: 47, where the disciples are said to have had *favor with all the people*. It is thought, by some, that the sacred writer here expresses the same idea; namely, that great favor was felt towards the Christians on the part

or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according

of the people generally. This favor arose from the facts which are stated in the connected verses, in reference to the mutual affection of the Christians, and the unexampled kindness with which they treated each other. But, while it is true that a feeling of favor existed in the community towards the Christians, the sacred writer may be very properly understood here as referring to the special favor of God resting on the followers of Christ, and his influence as leading them to their mutual affection, and their readiness to subserve one another's welfare. God eminently aided them by his influence on their hearts; so that to impartial beholders they were able to recommend the gospel, and to let all men know, in accordance with the words of their Master (John 13: 35), that they were his disciples, by their having love to one another. This is the true spirit of the gospel. Wherever and whenever it is exhibited, it shows the reality and the excellence of religion.

34. *Neither was there any among them that lacked.* No one among them was allowed by his brethren to be in want. A more literal reading of the clause would be, *For no one among them was in want.* The remark appears to have been made, as giving a reason for the favor with which the people regarded them; or, rather, as a proof that abundant grace from God had been bestowed on them. || *For as many as were possessors, &c.* Those who owned property parted with their possessions, to obtain ready money for giving immediate relief to the destitute. The money, too, which they thus received, they put at the disposal of the apostles for distribution, as appears by the next verse.

35. *And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.*

as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

The apostles distributed the money which was intrusted to them for this purpose, to such as stood in need. From this clause it appears, that the money was for supplying the wants of the poor, and not for providing a common stock, from which every member of the Christian community should be sustained. A fund was raised for the wants of the poor; those who had need, applied to the apostles for aid from this fund. Those who did not need such aid, lived, as before, on their own resources. It does not appear, that generally those who had property parted with the whole of it, but with so much as circumstances rendered proper and necessary. Compare the note on 2: 44, 45. There would be the greater readiness on the part of many Christians thus to dispose of lands and houses, because from the continued hostility of the Jewish rulers to the cause of Christ, they had reason to apprehend persecution which might render their property valueless to them, or unavailable by them; and from the predictions of the Saviour, they had reason to expect the overthrow of Jerusalem in the civil contests which were ere long to begin.

36. *Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation.* *Barnabas* is a word derived from two Hebrew words, which mean *son of teaching* or *preaching*. The two Greek words, here translated *son of consolation*, may also mean *son of preaching* or *exhortation*. From Acts 13: 1, it is evident that Barnabas was a preacher; and in all probability, he early showed abilities of mind and graces of heart which made him eminently useful in exhortation and

CHAPTER V.

1 After that Ananias and Sapphira his wife for their hypocrisy at Peter's rebuke had fallen down dead, 12 and that the rest of the apostles had wrought many miracles, 14 to the increase of the faith: 17 the apostles are again imprisoned, 19 but delivered by an angel bidding them to preach openly to all: 21 when, after their teaching ac-

preaching. From the fact, recorded in the next verse, of his selling his land and giving up the avails to the apostles for the benefit of the poor, he appears to have been an eminently charitable man, and to have delighted in ministering to the happiness of others. *Son of consolation* was, doubtless, an epithet appropriate to his character; yet his surname was probably occasioned by his eminent qualifications for public teaching. || *A Levite.* The Levites were descendants of Levi, one of the patriarch Jacob's sons, and consequently the head of a tribe among the Hebrews. This tribe was set apart by divine direction, for the services of religion. The descendants of Aaron, in particular, who belonged to this tribe, were to be priests; and the other Levites were to perform the various other duties which the service of the tabernacle and the temple required. From among them were selected the musicians and singers. See Num. ch. 4. As the Levites were thus set apart for the service of religion, they did not share in the division of the country among the tribes in the same way as the other tribes did (Deut. 10: 8, 9), but received forty-eight cities in different parts of the land. Num. 35: 2-8. They were not, however, forbidden in their individual capacity to hold property, as appears from the case of Jeremiah, who belonged to this tribe. In Jer. 32: 6, &c., we read of his making a purchase of land according to divine direction. || *Of the country of Cyprus.* Barnabas was a native of Cyprus, an important island in the Mediterranean sea, west of the northern part of Palestine.

cordingly in the temple, 29 and before the council, 33 they are in danger to be killed, through the advice of Gamaliel, a great counsellor among the Jews, they be kept alive, 40 and are but beaten: for which they glorify God, and cease no day from preaching.

BUT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

CHAPTER V.

The generosity of the primitive Christians in parting with their possessions to supply the wants of the destitute, became a temptation to some of their number. They sought the praise of being charitable; and their love of vainglory led them to gross deception. The last chapter ended with mentioning an instance of genuine Christian benevolence. The present chapter opens with an instance, in which the praise of men appears to have been mainly sought. The rebuke of God fell heavily on the guilty couple who attempted by a show of liberality to deceive the apostles.

1. *Sold a possession.* It was land which Ananias sold, as appears from v. 3.

2. *And kept back part of the price.* Pretending to deliver up the whole amount which was received for the land, he deceitfully retained a portion of it for his private use. || *His wife also being privy to it.* His wife was privately made acquainted with his purpose, and agreed to join in the deception which he was designing to practise.

3. *But Peter said.* The apostle appears to have been divinely assisted to detect the dishonesty and hypocrisy of Ananias. The purpose to deceive was, doubtless, kept a secret in the breast of Ananias and of Sapphira; but God could not be deceived, and he could make his servant acquainted with the iniquitous design. || *Why hath Satan filled thy heart?* It is customary, in the Bible, to ascribe evil purposes and desires, particularly those which involve uncommon guilt,

2 And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to *it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

to the influence of Satan. Thus, in Luke 22: 3, and John 13: 27, Satan is said to have *entered into* Judas Iscariot, when Judas became fully bent on betraying Jesus to the Jewish rulers. When Satan is said to *enter into a man*, or to *fill his heart*, the idea conveyed is, that Satan gets possession, as it were, of the man's heart, so as to make him his agent in accomplishing an evil design. In other words, Satan incites him to a course of wickedness. Yet such language is employed without intending to excuse men, in the least degree, for any wrong inclination or conduct; because the voluntary consent of men to the evil suggestions, or temptations, of Satan, is always implied in such language; and we know from Scripture, that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. James 4: 7. Hence the meaning of the inquiry "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" is, Why hast thou allowed thyself to be drawn away by the incitements of Satan? The apostle, therefore, says in the next verse, "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart?" — It is no more an excuse for our sins, that Satan tempted us to commit them, than it is an excuse that our fellow-men suggest evil thoughts to our minds, or that the evil thoughts which we indulge arise from the various objects around us, and from events which are occurring; because, in all these cases, there is a voluntary yielding to temptation. So the apostle clearly thought; for he proceeded to charge Ananias with inexpressible guilt. || *To lie to the Holy Ghost.* The apostles, in a particular manner, were most copiously favored with the influences of the Holy Spirit. To

4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

tell a lie to men who were thus filled with the Holy Spirit, or to attempt to deceive them, was in reality lying to the Holy Spirit, attempting to deceive that Being who knows all things.

4. *While it remained*; that is, unsold. || *Was it not thine own?* was it not thy own property, held in thy own possession, and entirely subject to thy disposal? Wast thou not at liberty to do with it just as thou mightest please, to sell it or not? to sell a part of it, or the whole? There was no compulsion in the case. Each person was left to the promptings of his own heart, in regard to selling his property for the relief of the destitute. || *After it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* after the land was sold, was not the money, received for it, wholly at thy own disposal, whether to give it in whole or in part, or not at all? These inquiries of the apostle show that no rule was established by authority, among the first Christians, in regard to the disposing of their property. The whole matter was left to each individual's heart and conscience. See on 2: 44, 45. || *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* In the preceding verse, the charge of lying to the Holy Spirit is made by the apostle against Ananias, inasmuch as Peter and the other apostles received their extraordinary endowments from the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit acted through them. The same idea is conveyed by the expression, "Thou hast lied unto God." On various occasions, the terms *God* and *the Holy Spirit* were used by the apostles as interchangeable. All the extraordinary gifts bestowed on the apostles and the first Christians, are specially ascribed in the New Testament to the Holy Spirit. Thus, in

5 And Ananias hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost. And great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

Acts 1: 5, the promise was made to the apostles that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost; and we read repeatedly concerning them and other Christians, that they were filled with the Holy Ghost. In 1 Cor. 12: 4—11, the peculiar gifts bestowed on the followers of Christ are traced to the operation of the Holy Spirit. The two expressions, *Thou hast lied unto the Holy Spirit*, and *Thou hast lied unto God*, might commonly, then, be employed as having the same meaning. In the different operations, however, which are involved in the plan of man's redemption, a special office appears to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit, just as a special office is ascribed to the Son of God. Thus, in John 3: 5, the renewal of the heart, which is necessary to our salvation, is traced to the Spirit; and to the same divine agent is referred, in John 16: 8, the work of effectually convincing men of their sins; and in 1 Cor. 2: 10, the enlarged instructions which are imparted to believers, God is said to reveal to them by his Spirit.

5. *Gave up the ghost*; expired. He died by the special visitation of God, as a punishment for his hypocrisy, and his attempt to deceive men in whom the Holy Spirit eminently dwelt, making them the instruments of his wonderful works. || *And great fear came on all them that heard these things.* This remark was probably made, not so much with reference to the time between the death of Ananias and that of his wife, as to the time subsequent to both the events, when knowledge of them had been spread abroad. The same thought is repeated in v. 11. Some, however, may have heard of the fate of Ananias, before the death of his wife. They would naturally be

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land

filled with horror at the intelligence.

6. *The young men arose, wound him up, &c.* The circumstances of the case required as speedy a burial as could be performed. Neither the place, nor the circumstances, would admit of much formal preparation for a funeral. It was customary, too, among the Jews, to bury on the same day that death occurred. Coffins were not in use; and it would be necessary, in a case so evidently resulting from the judgment of God, only to wrap up the corpse, perhaps in the very mantle of the deceased, and convey it to the place of interment. That this was all done without delay, and without sending information to his wife, may be traced to Peter's direction, acting under a divine influence. The labor was performed by the young men. Their age and greater ability to perform such a service, made them the proper persons; and doubtless on them, rather than on the more advanced, devolved many things pertaining to the Christian assemblies which required labor, or which a due respect for advancing age would indicate as more appropriate to the younger members.

7. *And it was about the space of three hours after; probably at the next hour for social worship. || His wife, not knowing what was done.* It may seem strange, that, during the three hours which had elapsed, tidings of her husband's death should not have reached her, especially as the event occurred in a city. But the horror with which those were struck who witnessed the scene and who heard of it, and their suspicions, at least, that she was involved in the same guilt as her husband, and their consequent desire not to see her,— to say nothing of the want of time

for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them

before and after his burial (v. 9), or of a variety of personal and domestic affairs that would require to be attended to before the next hour of worship,— may account for the fact that no one conveyed intelligence to her. Besides, there may have been an injunction of silence from the apostle Peter in respect to Sapphira, so that she might be fully tested as to her integrity. Various circumstances may be conceived of, that would account for her not having received information. But it is not the manner of Luke to enter into a minute detail of subordinate circumstances. He faithfully relates the principal and important facts—those which it was proper to keep on record.

8. *Peter answered; or, said.* See on 3: 12. || *Whether ye sold the land for so much?* The apostle doubtless mentioned the amount which Ananias had brought, and which he had pretended was the whole that had been received for the land. In reply to the apostle's inquiry, whether that was the whole, she affirmed it to be so, and thus made herself visibly a partaker of her husband's sin.

9. *To tempt the Spirit of the Lord.* *To tempt* often signifies *to try, to put to the proof.* The apostle spoke of the intended imposition of Ananias and his wife, as a sort of trial, or test, on their part, fitted to determine whether the Spirit of the Lord would really know and expose their deception, or whether they would not be successful in deluding the apostles, and in securing the undeserved credit of eminent benevolence. Not that they distinctly proposed it *as their design*, to put the Spirit of the Lord, or the apostles, to this proof, in order simply to ascertain, for their own satisfaction, or for the benefit of others, whether their hypocrisy could, or

which have buried thy husband
are at the door, and shall carry
thee out.

10 Then fell she down straight-
way at his feet, and yielded up the
ghost. And the young men came

would, be detected. But such was the nature of their conduct, that it involved a doubt whether their sin would be known ; or a disbelief as to the knowledge and holiness of God, and the supernatural ability with which the apostles were endowed. Their conduct, in attempting to deceive the men who were specially aided by the Holy Spirit, in addition to the vainglory in which it originated, was in its nature reproachful to the Holy Spirit himself, and of course extremely offensive to him. So ignorant and presumptuous were they. So deep was their impiety. So utterly regardless were they of the honor which cometh from God, in their desire to gain preëminence among their fellow-mortals. || *Shall carry thee out*; to bury thee. She readily understood the language as announcing her immediate death. From the next verse, we learn that she accordingly died on the spot.

11. *And great fear came upon all, &c.* The fate of Ananias and Sapphira made it so evident that the apostles were specially aided by the Holy Spirit, and that their denunciations of divine wrath on the guilty, would not be in vain, that they were regarded with increased reverence by all who heard of these events. A salutary dread of the divine Being who had thus detected and punished hypocrisy, was also more deeply and generally felt.

Thus, near the beginning of the Christian dispensation, a clear proof was given of its holy nature, of the jealousy of God for its reputation, and his abhorrence of hypocritical pretensions to sanctity. His dealings towards Ananias and Sapphira could not but promote watchfulness and sincerity among the professed followers of Christ, and tend to prevent others from uniting with them whose

in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

hearts were not really devoted to the Saviour. On account of the unexampled liberality of the church in Jerusalem, some persons might otherwise have been induced to unite with it for the sordid purpose of receiving charitable aid ; and others from the empty wish to acquire distinction in regard to a charitable spirit. It is worthy of notice, that not very long after the establishment of the Mosaic dispensation, two persons were instantly struck dead — Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron — for presumption in the manner of performing the duties which had been assigned them. See Lev. 10 : 1—5.

REFLECTIONS. How eminently did the events just related, show that “lying lips are an abomination to the Lord” ! Prov. 12 : 22. How useless is deception ; particularly in reference to religious matters. Iniquity cannot be concealed from God ; and, if the honor of his cause so require, he can at any moment expose and punish insincerity. For secrecy in sin is no defence from the eye, or the hand, of God. His “eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” Prov. 15 : 3. Compare Ps. 139 : 11, 12. And while we perceive the awful nature of falsehood and insincerity, as well as their certain doom, let us admire and practise sincerity on all occasions. Always and every where is sincerity lovely, and pleasing to God. How desirable, that we be able to say with the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 1 : 12), “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” ! “Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor” (Eph. 4 : 25) ; for if we would dwell in the

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but

holy hill of God, we must "walk uprightly, and work righteousness, and speak the truth in our hearts." Ps. 15: 2.

Union in sin gives no security to the transgressor. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Prov. 11: 21.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Prov. 14: 32.

12. *And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.* The apostles and the Christians generally are here referred to. The number of Christians was so much increased, that they needed a more commodious place to assemble in, than private houses could afford. Hence, they availed themselves of the conveniences which the porch of the temple, called Solomon's (see on 3: 11), and which was a kind of portico, or piazza, furnished them. In 1: 13, we find that the Christian company assembled in an upper room of a private house; but now, how increased had their number become! See 4: 4.

13. *And of the rest durst no man, &c.* The persons here meant are evidently distinguished from those in the preceding verse, who kept together as a company animated by one spirit. They were, then, people who had not yet become believers. And such an awe had the miracles of the apostles, and perhaps, particularly, the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, produced in them, that they did not dare to mingle with the Christian company, at least in public. || *The people magnified them.* The common people are here meant, in distinction from the chief men among the Jews. The rulers, doubtless, affected to hold the apostles and other Christians in contempt. But the people in general regarded them

the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women ;)

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, with veneration, and spoke highly of them.

14. *Believers were the more added to the Lord.* Multitudes more became believers, and were added to the church. This might be expected from the high regard for the Christians, which pervaded the people generally. Such a state of mind was favorable for weighing the instructions and exhortations of the apostles. The remark, however, in this verse, may seem to be at variance with the statement in the preceding verse—that of the rest durst no man join himself to them. Still, the two declarations are harmonious. For though such an awe seized the minds of those who did not belong to the Christian company, that they did not dare familiarly to associate with them in public, yet many such persons became convinced of the truth, and were converted to the faith, and then were added to the church.

15. *Insomuch that they brought forth the sick, &c.* This verse seems to show one of the consequences which resulted from the great respect for the Christian company which the people felt, and from the increase of believers. A wide-spread confidence was felt in the healing power with which the apostles were endowed. Hence, in numerous instances, sick people were removed from their houses, and placed in the streets, where the apostles, and particularly Peter, might see them, and where application could be more readily made for the exercise of the healing power. The connection of this verse with the 14th is not immediately obvious; and probably the 14th should be included in a parenthesis. Thus the 15th verse would follow, as a statement intimately connected with the remark that "the people magnified them." || *Laid.*

that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with un-

them on beds and couches. The former of these two articles, in the original, denoted a more costly and convenient bed than the latter—such as would be used by persons in comparatively easy circumstances as to property. The word translated *couches* signified some rather ordinary article, having scarcely more than a skin or a rug for a covering. By mentioning these two kinds of beds, the sacred writer shows, that it was not merely the poor who were thus brought forth from their houses for the benefit of the apostles' healing power, but that some also from the more wealthy classes sought healing in the same manner. || *The shadow of Peter, &c.* That those sick persons on whom the shadow of Peter fell, were, in connection with that circumstance, restored to health, seems implied by the writer's language. These persons had an undoubting confidence in the healing power with which Peter was endowed as an apostle of Jesus; and their confidence in him, as thus supernaturally endowed, secured to them the desired blessing. It was by no means unnatural that they should connect this power with his shadow, as well as with his person. The feeling was much the same as that which was cherished by the woman who came to Jesus and touched the hem of his garment, saying within herself, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." Matt. 9: 20, 21. Mark 5: 25—34. An account somewhat similar is related concerning Paul. Through him, too, God wrought special miracles, making the touch, by sick persons, of handkerchiefs and aprons which had been applied to his body, efficacious in restoring them to health. See Acts 19: 11, 12.

16. *There came also a multitude*

clean spirits; and they were healed every one.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

out of the cities round about, &c. Intelligence of the remarkable cures which were performed in Jerusalem, led many inhabitants of the neighboring towns to bring into the city their friends who were sick, and those who were afflicted by unclean spirits, for a similar cure. Their application, too, was successful.

17. The remarkable success which followed the labors of the apostles, and the wide-spread impression among the people in favor of the Christian cause, aroused the indignation of the Jewish authorities. The rulers cherished the same spirit towards the disciples, as had led them to oppose and crucify Jesus. They, therefore, naturally sought for means to crush the rising interest.

The high priest rose up. Whether by the *high priest* is here meant Caiaphas, who was in reality the high priest, or Annas, his father-in-law, who still bore the title of high priest, and had much influence with Caiaphas and other distinguished men (see on 4: 6), cannot be decided. The simple mention of the high priest, without the name of an individual, favors the belief that it is Caiaphas who was meant. It was altogether in keeping with his character, that his indignation should be aroused in view of the passing transactions, and that he should bestir himself to excite similar feelings among his partisans in the sanhedrim. To him more than to any other man was the crucifixion of Jesus to be traced (compare John 11: 49, 50); and he would never lack promptness in endeavoring to extirpate the very name of Jesus of Nazareth. || *All they that were with him.* Reference is probably had here to those members of the sanhedrim who were eminently his partisans, siding with him on all

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

occasions, and favoring his views. Such men would, doubtless, be his most intimate associates; and measures preliminary to persecution on the part of the sanhedrim collectively, would probably be concerted with such men. || *Which is the sect of the Sadducees.* It was the Sadducean portion of the sanhedrim that were thus united in feeling and interest with the high priest. The severity of character which marked Caiaphas, and the fact that a son of Annas was a Sadducee, make it highly probable that Annas and Caiaphas both belonged to this sect. The distinguishing sentiments of the Sadducees would make them peculiarly hostile to the Christians. See on 4:1. For the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, on which the apostles so earnestly insisted, was a direct confutation of the Sadducean errors; so that the Sadducees might feel an occasion for special ill-will against the Christians, in addition to the unwillingness which other Jews felt to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah.

18. *Put them in the common prison;* the public prison. Though they were confined in the public prison, and thus treated with unmerited violence and disgrace, yet there is no evidence that they were placed in company with the vilest malefactors. The language of the 23d verse makes it evident, either that they were the only persons then in prison, or that they were confined in an apartment by themselves.

19. *But the angel of the Lord by night opened, &c.*; more properly, according to the original, *an angel.* Some interpreters explain this liberation of the apostles from prison, as resulting from a violent storm of thunder and lightning, or from an earthquake, which had the effect of throwing open the doors. Other more objectionable methods of explanation have been proposed by writers who are unfriendly to the

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

belief of a direct and miraculous interposition of the Deity in behalf of his servants. That the sacred writer meant to convey the idea of there having been a real interposition of heaven on this occasion, is quite evident. The apostles could not have been liberated by any dishonest means on the part of their friends without, or on the part of the jailer; for the guards outside would have opposed their escape, or would have been able to give some account of the event. Had there been, as some writers vainly suggest, a storm of thunder and lightning, or an earthquake, sufficiently powerful to produce the effect of throwing open the prison doors, the guards would have known it, and would have been able to explain the absence of the apostles from the prison. They seem, however, to have been as ignorant on the subject, as the officers (v. 22) who came to the prison for the purpose of bringing the apostles before the sanhedrim. It is evident that both the sanhedrim and all who were interested in opposing the apostles, saw that their liberation could be explained in no common way. There was something very special and supernatural about it. And this was, probably, one reason why Gamaliel was led to give his wise advice in the case (v. 35), and others were led to adopt it. v. 40. The obvious meaning of the language, that an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought forth the apostles, is doubtless the true meaning. With this agrees the statement, that the angel spake to the apostles, giving them instructions whether to go and what to do. v. 20. If it be asked, how the angel could open the doors, and bring out the apostles, without the guards' knowing it and being able to give a correct account, we must remember, that we are not acquainted with the methods which an angel might employ, and that, on another signal occasion, Peter,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But

having been thrown into prison, was in like manner liberated by a heavenly messenger, while a strong guard at his side and at the gate was left in entire ignorance of what had taken place. See 12:7-10. We may fully believe the *facts* recorded in the sacred volume, though we may know nothing as to the *manner* in which they were accomplished. And let us here admire the wisdom of God, which can so readily circumvent the ill designs of his adversaries, and make even their wrath to praise him. In the hands of such a God we are safe, however numerous, and determined, and crafty, our foes may be; and in the providence of God, the most sagacious designs of his enemies will be thwarted, and no weapon formed against the church of Christ will prosper (Is. 54:17); for God has boundless resources for putting down the opposition of his adversaries, and can make it subserve the advancement of his cause.

20. *The words of this life.* The instruction which the apostles gave, showed the way to eternal life. They pointed men to Jesus, through whom only we can become heirs of eternal life. The expression *words of this life* is regarded by some eminent writers as another form of saying *these words of life*. How similar to this language of the angel, concerning the doctrine of Christ, are the words of Christ himself in John 6:40—"Every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall have everlasting life"! In accordance with the Saviour's language, Peter declared (John 6:68), "Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life." May we have the same spirit of faith in Jesus which led Peter, on the same occasion, to say, "Lord, to whom [but to thee] shall we go?"

21. *And when they heard that, they*

the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

entered, &c. God evidently approved the course of Peter and John; and, as he had now directed them to continue their teaching in the temple, they went on without fear. || *Early in the morning*; at the dawning of the day, or about daybreak. It was customary for the people to resort to the temple at a very early hour for religious purposes. Compare Luke 21:38. John 8:2. The apostles, in obedience to the angel's direction, went into the temple as soon as any people were assembled, thus embracing the earliest opportunity to address the morning worshippers.

|| *The high priest came*; to the place where the sanhedrim held its sessions. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says it was a place not far from the temple. Some later Jewish writers assert that it was in the temple. A meeting for any special exigency might be held, however, elsewhere than in the ordinary place; as, in the trial of Jesus, this court assembled in the palace of the high priest. See Matt. 26:3, 57. John 18:24. || *They that were with him*; probably his more intimate friends and partisans, as in v. 17th. || *All the senate.* Under this name are included the men who are elsewhere called *the elders of Israel*, as in 4:5, or *the estate of the elders*, as in 22:5; that is, men of chief note and influence among the people, particularly for their age and experience. This class appears to be here mentioned as distinct from the council, or sanhedrim; and the body of men to whom the title *elders* was particularly appropriate, was, perhaps, specially invited to sit with the sanhedrim on this occasion. The state of affairs was becoming very serious, and the rulers may have thought it desirable to combine together as much influence as possible.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now, when the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are stand-

22. *The officers*; men who were employed to attend on the sanhedrim, for executing their orders; somewhat as constables among us are in attendance at our courts of justice. They were the men who had been sent to bring the apostles from the prison (v. 21), and to place them before the Jewish court.

24. *The captain of the temple*. See on 4:1. || *The chief priests*. This title was given to those men who were heads of the twenty-four classes, into which the priests were divided, according to the arrangement stated in 1 Chron. ch. 24. These men were members of the sanhedrim. The title was also given to men who had been high priests, but who, for various reasons, had been superseded in their office; for though, by divine appointment, a high priest was to continue in office during life, the high priesthood, in the degenerate times when the Jews were subject to the Roman power, was perpetually changing hands, and was even disposed of for money. || *They doubted of them whereunto this would grow*; they were thrown into perplexity, and, in the unprecedented circumstances which had arisen, knew not what to make of the matter, nor what to expect from it.

26. *The captain*; the captain of the temple, so called in v. 24, and in 4:1. || *The officers*; the attendants on the sanhedrim, the same that had

ing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring

before been sent to bring the apostles from the prison. v. 21. || *For they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned*. In such reverence and favor did the common people hold the apostles, that a violent attempt to seize their persons would have exposed the officers to abuse. Violence, however, was not needed. The apostles would quietly go and appear before the rulers. They would thus have an opportunity to vindicate their Master's cause in the presence of the chief men. The recent interposition of heaven in their behalf could not but have increased their confidence in God's protecting and overruling power. They relied, too, on divine aid in making their defence before the rulers (Matt. 10:19, 20), and anticipated a result favorable to their cause from the very efforts to silence and punish them.

28. *Did we not straitly command you, &c.* See 4:17, 18. || *Ye should not teach in this name*; in the name of Jesus, concerning him, or, rather, as his servants, appealing to his authority. || *Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*. Thus the Jewish rulers bore testimony to the unwearied diligence of the apostles, and to the wide-spread reception which had been given to their instructions, as well as to the utter futility of their own efforts to crush the cause of Jesus. || *Intend to bring this man's blood on us*. They referred to Jesus, whose

this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We

death had been effected by their means; but they were unwilling to utter his name. They still, perhaps, affected to hold him in contempt. They now insinuated that the apostles were attempting to convince the people that the rulers, in putting Jesus to death, had committed a crime of unutterable guilt, as having condemned a guiltless person, and cut off the Messiah. They also affected to regard the apostles' conduct, in maintaining the cause of Christ, as adapted to diminish the people's respect for the rulers, and, perhaps, even to excite the people to take vengeance on the rulers. The apostles did, indeed, maintain that Jesus was wrongfully put to death; but, so far from acting in a revengeful manner, and wishing to bring public odium on the rulers, they were solicitous that all, both rulers and people, should repent, and become partakers of the benefits which Jesus only, as Messiah, could bestow. Compare 2: 38. 3: 19. 4: 12. In charging guilt on the adversaries of Jesus, they used as mild language as the case would allow, and made much allowance for the ignorance of his real character and dignity, which blinded them to the true nature of their guilt. Compare 3: 17. How proper it would have been for these rulers to have remembered the exclamation,— in the spirit of which they united,— “His blood be on us and on our children”! Matt. 27: 25.

29. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered, &c.* Peter spoke in the name of all the apostles. || *We ought to obey God.* The apostles were specially appointed, by divine authority, for the very purpose of bearing testimony to Jesus as the Messiah. Such is the purport of their reply to the sanhedrim. See v. 32. Should they cease to bear testimony to Jesus, and to inculcate the facts respecting his death and resurrection, even out of regard to

ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers

the rulers, they would be disobedient to God. And this, no man, and no body of men, had a right to demand of them. Should it be demanded of them by any human authority, they felt themselves bound by a previous obligation, which must not, on any consideration, be disregarded. In requiring them to cease bearing testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, and thus vindicating his Messiahship, the sanhedrim transcended their powers. It was the rulers who were in fault, not the apostles; and, as the apostles had unquestionable evidence of being required from heaven to maintain the cause of Jesus, and as it was only undeniable facts respecting him to which they bore testimony, the apostles would have been inexcusable had they ceased to maintain his cause. They appealed then, as they had before appealed, to the consciences of the rulers, whether it would be right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto them more than unto God. See 4: 19, 20.

30. *The God of our fathers;* that is, as Peter said on a previous occasion, “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob” (3: 13), the early patriarchs, to whom God gave special promise of the Messiah — that very God whom those fathers worshipped, and who treated them with so much kindness. The apostle proceeded to affirm, that in Jesus were fulfilled the promises which had been made to the fathers of the nation. || *Raised up*; either, raised up from the dead, or, as the same word is employed in 13: 23, brought into the world and presented to the people: || *Whom ye — hanged on a tree.* The word rendered *hanged* was applicable to any kind of punishment in which the sufferer's person was elevated, and was therefore a suitable word to convey the idea of crucifixion. The word translated *tree* has the general signification of *wood*, and means here an instrument of

raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree :

31 Him hath God exalted with

punishment made of wood, that is, the cross. The idea, of course, is, ‘whom ye put to death by fastening him to a cross.’ In a similar manner of speaking, the apostle Peter says, in his first Epistle (2: 24), that Christ “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”

31. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand*; or, as also in 2: 33, *to his right hand*. Compare Mark 16: 19. Ps. 110: 1. Thus God gave signal proof, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. || *To be a Prince and a Saviour*; to be the ruler, or leader, of his people (Heb. 2: 10), and to save them from their sins. Matt. 1: 21. Heb. 5: 9. Compare the epithet *Prince of life*, in 3: 15. || *To give repentance*. One of the great purposes for which the Messiah was to appear, was to lead men to repentance, that is, to a sincere abandonment of sin and a holy course of life, and thus to establish the dominion of righteousness on the earth. It was he, then, eminently, who was to give repentance. The new dispensation which he was to introduce, was to be peculiarly marked by religious knowledge and by holiness. His doctrines would be adapted to convince men of their sinfulness and danger. By his atoning death, the way would be prepared for the renewal of men’s hearts through the influences of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of that Spirit was to be in consequence of his merits. It was, also, according to the divine arrangement that Jesus should first die, and then ascend to heaven, and subsequently the Holy Spirit’s influence be copiously imparted. Thus he was exalted to the Father’s right hand, to give repentance, by sending the Spirit to convince men of their true character and condition, to renew their hearts, and form them to righteousness. See John 16: 7, 8. Repentance is, indeed, a man’s own act, both in respect to his sorrow for sin, and his

his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

entering on a holy life. It is also the gift of Christ, inasmuch as the disposition to forsake sin is bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit’s influences are a direct result of the Saviour’s mediation. || *To Israel*. The apostle was addressing Israelites; and there was no occasion for him to speak of Jesus as a Saviour for other nations. The people of Israel—that is, the Jews—were those to whom the promise of a Messiah was made. To them, in distinction from other nations, he first came (John 1: 11. Matt. 15: 24), and offered the blessings of his administration. And though they rejected and crucified him, yet the knowledge of his religion was not to be extended till after repeated opportunities should be given to them to obtain its blessings. Compare Luke 24: 47. Acts 13: 46. In the same sense, however, as Jesus was to give repentance to the Jews, he gives it to others also. For all are sinners, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, alike needing the mediation of Christ and the influences of the Holy Spirit to renew their hearts, and thus lead them to true repentance. || *And forgiveness of sins*. Such is the arrangement which the gospel presents for bestowing pardon on sinners, that pardon may either be ascribed to Christ as his act, or represented as granted on account of what Christ has done and suffered for men. Thus the apostle Paul says, in Eph. 4: 32, “God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you;” and in Col. 3: 13, “Christ forgave you.” And in Matt. 9: 6, the Lord Jesus declared that he had power to forgive sins. To the apostles it would seem to have been immaterial, whether they said, God forgave sins, or Christ forgave them. Their views of Christ were so exalted, that they never scrupled to ascribe to him the perfections and the acts of the Deity. Such views were necessary, in order that they might speak of him as giving pardon of sin; for “who

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

can forgive sins but God only?" See Luke 5: 21.

OBSERVE the order of the thoughts presented in this verse. Forgiveness is never bestowed but in connection with repentance. How needful the inquiry, then, Have we experienced that godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of? See 2 Cor. 7: 10.

32. *We are his witnesses.* We are appointed witnesses for Jesus, in respect to the facts of his resurrection and exaltation to heaven, and to the doctrine of forgiveness in his name. || *So is also the Holy Ghost.* The miraculous deeds which the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform, were so many testimonies from heaven that Jesus was exalted at the Father's right hand as the Messiah and the Saviour. || *To them that obey him.* The apostle here meant himself and his brethren, as disciples of Christ, as those who acknowledged Christ to be their Lord, and who had therefore (see 2: 38) received, besides the remission of their sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

REMARK. The firmness with which the apostles bore testimony for the Lord Jesus before the sanhedrim, reminds us of the prayer which had so recently been offered in their behalf. See 4: 29. It is worthy, too, of distinct notice, that, while they firmly vindicated themselves on the ground of being divinely called to their work, they showed no arrogance and brought no railing accusation against their adversaries. They were in a deeply religious and devout frame of mind, sincerely benevolent, and intent on the spiritual welfare of men. How different from mere enthusiasts, who profess to be impelled by a divine influence, but are exceedingly

33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in prone to indulge in denunciations against their opponents!

How greatly God has always honored those who obey the Lord Jesus! The Holy Spirit, that divine helper and earnest of eternal life, dwells peculiarly with them. Though his miraculous agency is discontinued, as being no longer needed, yet his instructing, sanctifying, and cheering agency will never be withdrawn.

33. *They were cut to the heart;* not, however, with sorrow, but with indignation against the apostles. They were enraged by the self-collected and uncompromising manner in which the apostles vindicated themselves and the cause of their Master.

|| *Took counsel to slay them.* The high priest and his party were bent on the apostles' destruction. This, too, they wished to accomplish without delay. In their excitement against the apostles, it would seem that they even omitted, at first, the customary formality of having those whose cause was under examination, retire from the council during the deliberations on their case. Compare 4: 15.

Thus their bloody purpose was fully disclosed in the presence of their intended victims. The apostles, however, were prepared for such a manifestation of ill-will; for Jesus had forewarned them that the spirit of persecution which had assailed him would also assail them, and that they must expect the same kind of treatment which he had received. Compare Matt. 10: 24, 25. John 15: 20, 16: 2. The Jewish rulers had formerly, with stern resolution, sought the death of Jesus (John 11: 47—50, 53, 57. Luke 19: 47. 20: 19, 20), in the vain hope that by removing him they would crush his cause. The same murderous spirit they continued to indulge towards his apostles, blind

the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to your to its guilt, and to the folly of seeking, by such means, to prevent the spread of religious principles.

34. *Gamaliel.* Three distinguished persons of this name are spoken of in Jewish records. The one who is generally believed to be here mentioned, is called "the elder," being an ancestor of the other two. The title *rabban*—the most honorable title among the ancient Jewish teachers—was also given him in consequence of the great reputation which he had acquired. He is believed to have been a son of the aged Simeon, who, according to Luke 2: 25—34, took the infant Saviour in his arms. He was also the instructor of the apostle Paul. Acts 22: 3. According to Jewish tradition, he died about the year 55 of the Christian era, perhaps twenty-two years after the events recorded in this chapter. He lived long enough to see the wisdom of the counsel which he gave, and ample proof that the cause of the apostles was really the cause of God. According to Jewish accounts, however, it is probable he lived and died a Pharisee. || *A doctor of the law.* Gamaliel was a teacher and expounder of the Jewish law. His profession, as an interpreter of the Jewish sacred books, and as one expected to pronounce a decision on intricate cases, required him to be intimately acquainted both with the writings of Moses and with the oral traditions which had been handed down from remote times, and which were held equally binding with the laws of Moses. The doctors of the law, who were likewise called *scribes*, were also employed in making copies of the sacred books. They were men of much influence. || *And commanded.* The original word is sometimes used in the sense of *counselled*,

selves what ye intend to do as touching these men:

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and

advised. || *To put the apostles forth, &c.*; to have the apostles retire a short time, so that he might with the more propriety give his advice to the rulers.

36. *Theudas.* This person was one who had distinguished himself as a seditious impostor, probably, during the troublesome times which arose after Herod the Great had died, and before the government was finally settled on his son Archelaus; that is, during the time when the child Jesus was in Egypt. Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes those times as having been extremely tumultuous. He makes mention of another Theudas, who engaged in sedition several years after this time, and who was destroyed, with all his adherents, by Fadius, the Roman procurator. But Gamaliel was here relating what had already taken place. It is likely that, as Theudas was anciently a frequent name, there were more persons than one of this name who had made seditious attempts against the Roman government. Nor is it at all surprising that Josephus does not mention the one of whom Gamaliel spoke; for there were so many insurrectionary movements, that the historian would designedly pass over some; and this which Gamaliel mentions, though exactly suited to his purpose in advising the rulers, might not have been of so much public importance as to lead Josephus to record it. The Jews were at this time in subjection to the Romans. They bore the Roman yoke with much uneasiness, and were always ready to be excited by any popular leader of flattering pretensions. Such efforts at revolution, however, were always defeated; and they contributed to the final overthrow of the nation by the Roman power. || *Boasting himself to be*

all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much peo-

somebody; setting himself up as a leader, and pretending to uncommon ability. Compare 8:9. || *Brought to nought.* The rebellion under Theudas was wholly quelled by the Roman forces.

37. *Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing.* In the twelfth year of Christ, Archelaus, who had been made king of Judea after the death of his father, Herod the Great, was banished by the Roman emperor; and the arrangement for the government of Judea underwent a change. Judea was reduced to the form of a Roman province, and, besides having a Roman procurator placed over it, was considered as an appendage to the government of Syria. Quirinus, or, as he is called by Luke (2:2), *Cyrenius*, was at that time president of Syria. He laid a tax on the territories which were subject to him, and of course on Judea. It was a new thing for the Jews to be thus taxed by the Romans; and Judas of Galilee, as being, perhaps, a native of Galilee, who is sometimes, particularly by Josephus, called a *Gaulonite*, on account, probably, of his having been brought up, or having resided, in the region of Gaulanitis, raised a sedition, on the ground that the paying of the tax would be an open acknowledgment of their subjection, and that the Jews, as being the people of God, ought not to submit to taxation by a heathen power. The taxing here mentioned should not be confounded with that which is spoken of in Luke 2:1, 2. That was only an enrolling of the inhabitants' names, without an imposing of tribute; this was an assessment on the people's property for the support of government. It was probably in reference to such opinions as those maintained by Judas of Galilee, that the inquiry was put to our Lord, whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. See Matt. 22:17—21.

ple after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let

By the two instances of Theudas and Judas, — men who had raised the standard of revolt, and gained over to their interests considerable numbers of the people, and who had thus attempted to establish a new order of things in the nation, but whose attempts had, in the course of divine providence, come to nought, without the intervention of the Jewish court, — Gamaliel sought to withdraw the sanhedrim from their purpose of violent action against the apostles. As providence had, in former cases, defeated the projects of several leaders, so, he intimated, the present attempts of the apostles ought not to be violently opposed by the Jewish court, but to be submitted to the same divine providence.

38. *Refrain from these men.* The fate of the two leaders just mentioned, showed that the wisest course for the sanhedrim would be, to abstain from violent interference. Such interference was unnecessary. If, like other movements, this was merely of human origin, it would fail; divine providence would defeat it, and therefore the Jewish court need not be disquieted, but should let the men alone. If, as the apostles seriously and earnestly claimed, it was of God, it would, of course, be in vain to attempt its suppression. Gamaliel was, evidently, impressed by the blameless conduct, the professions, and the devout appearance, of the apostles. His knowledge of the miracles which they had performed, and of the remarkable deliverance of Peter and John from prison, led him to consider it as at least a possibility that the cause in which they were engaged was of God. Though he was not fully convinced, nor disposed to join the apostles' company, yet his judgment would not allow him to persecute them. Their cause might, to say the least, have God's approval;

them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not

and, in that case, to oppose it would be to fight against God—a useless and a wicked employment.

39. *Haply*; perhaps.

How eminently has the gospel been proved to be of God! It has been perpetually assailed; but it still lives and prospers. The Lord our God in the midst of his people is mighty; and all combinations against the cause of Christ must be powerless.

40. *To him they agreed*. They adopted his advice, yet not throughout; they did not wholly “refrain from these men, and let them alone.” || *Beaten them*. The members of the sanhedrim probably felt that their honor was at stake, and that, if the apostles departed untouched, they themselves would be regarded as having proceeded against innocent men. To save the honor of the court, to make an impression on the public mind unfavorable to the apostles, and to punish what they would call the obstinacy and disobedience of the apostles in not obeying the formal command of the sanhedrim (4: 18), they ordered the apostles to be scourged. This was a frequent, though a very disgraceful, punishment among the Jews. Compare Matt. 10: 17.

41. *Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame, &c.* The apostles felt it an honor to be followers of Jesus, “in evil report as well as in good report.” 2 Cor. 6: 8. He had prepared them to meet ill-treatment (John 15: 20); and the Spirit of God gave them elevated views and purposes; so that, like their Master, they despised the shame

speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

(Heb. 12: 2) which, in the view of worldly men, the sanhedrim had poured on them. They thought of the cause for which they were suffering, rather than of the sufferings themselves; of their Master’s glory, rather than of their own disgrace; of their final recompense, rather than of present indignity. To be ashamed to suffer in a good cause, is indeed shameful. But “if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4: 16); for a Christian may glory even in tribulations (Rom. 5: 3. James 1: 2), and may consider it as God’s appointment for him not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his name. Phil. 1: 29. Let us, then, not seek the praise of man, but the praise of God, even though this may subject us to suffering and shame on earth. True-hearted disciples of Christ will not renounce their Lord through fear of suffering or of shame. We must confirm our holy purposes by thinking of our Master and of our end, and by anticipating the glory that shall be revealed.

42. *In every house*; from house to house, in private houses, as well as in the temple. || *They ceased not to teach, &c.*; they ceased not to teach respecting Jesus, and in his name, as authorized by him. They publicly maintained that Jesus was the Messiah. This was the point which it was then chiefly necessary to vindicate; and with this was connected instruction on the duty of repentance and faith in Jesus.

CHAPTER VI.

1 The apostles, desirous to have the poor regarded for their bodily sustenance, as also careful themselves to dispense the word of God, the food of the soul, 3 appoint the office of deaconship to seven chosen men. 5 Of whom Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, is one. 12 Who is taken of those, whom he confounded in disputing, 13 and after falsely accused of blasphemy against the law and the temple.

CHAPTER VI.

1. *A murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.* By *Grecians* here are not meant Gentile Greeks, in distinction from Jews; for the gospel was not yet introduced among the Gentiles. The word used in the original was employed to designate those Jews, who, having been born out of Palestine, in cities and regions where the Greek language was spoken, used the Greek as their ordinary language. On account of their resembling the Greeks in respect to language, they were called *Hellenists*, or, as the word is translated in the New Testament, *Grecians*. The *Hebrews*, on the other hand, were Jews who, in the ordinary intercourse of life, spoke a dialect of the Hebrew language. The Jews who lived in Palestine could easily retain a dialect of their national language, as they were the chief part of the population, and that language continued to be used on various public occasions. The two parties here spoken of, both *Grecians* and *Hebrews*, were Jews; one party using the Greek language, and the other a language substantially Hebrew. Of course, those who used the latter tongue regarded themselves as more thoroughly Jewish than the others; the others were regarded, to some extent, in the light of foreigners. Among the *Hellenists*, or *Grecians*, it is altogether likely there were some who were Gentiles by birth, but who had become proselytes to the Jewish religion. Many of the foreign Jews would naturally be induced to remove to Palestine, when circumstances favored. Of

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that

such residents many had become disciples of Jesus; and, as Jerusalem was, at that time, the only place where there was a fixed establishment of the Christian cause, it is very possible that some of the foreign Jews, who had united with the Christians on the day of Pentecost, had taken up their abode in the city. Jealousies in regard to the distribution for the destitute, might easily arise between the two classes of Jewish believers; and those who were called *Hellenists* would be easily led to think themselves, or their relatives, neglected, through a preference, on the part of the distributors, for those who were called *Hebreus*. It was, perhaps, more easy to ascertain the wants of the widows in the latter class; they might have had a larger number of friends, interested in seeing their wants supplied from the church's bounty, than those who had come to Palestine from abroad. || *The daily ministration*; the daily distribution for the supply of the poor. Compare 4: 35.

2. *The twelve*; the twelve apostles. The number was originally twelve. Matt. 10: 2. The place of Judas Iscariot, which had been vacated by his abandonment of his Lord and by his suicide (Matt. 27: 3—5. Acts 1: 25), had been supplied by the choice of Matthias. Acts 1: 26. || *Called the multitude of the disciples*. The apostles did not proceed at once, in the exercise of their authority, to make a new arrangement. They summoned together the company of believers for the purpose of advising them to a certain course, and wished them to form a decision according to

we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy

their sense of duty in the case. Thus early the principle was recognized of a church acting for itself, and according to its own judgment, in matters that pertained to its interests. Even the apostles did not, in this instance, *enjoin* a certain course. They wished the matter to be adjusted in a fraternal way, by joint action and joint consent, the assembled body of the Christians availing themselves of the superior wisdom and of the counsel of the apostles. Thus ought all church business to be conducted. The spirit of domination is here out of place. The collective body of a church possesses the power, in accordance with principles established by the spiritual Head of the church, to transact its own business. || *It is not reason*; it is not good, it is not agreeable to us. || *That we should leave the word of God*; that we should neglect, or be interrupted in, our proper employment of dispensing the gospel. || *Serve tables*. The original word for *table* is applied to the *table of a money-changer or broker*. John 2: 15. The care, and, perhaps, the distribution of the money which was raised by the sale of property among these primitive believers for the relief of the destitute, had devolved on the apostles. Acts 4: 35, 37. They were thus required to be concerned in pecuniary affairs, or, as it might be termed, to attend at the money-tables, and to spend much time in listening to applications from the destitute, and in distributing money to them. The expression *to serve tables* may therefore mean *to take care of the money affairs*, so far, at least, as to see that the poor had a proper provision for their tables. This expression may, however, mean directly *to provide for the tables of the poor*, by making the requisite distribution of money among them. This required so much time and attention from the apostles, that

Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

their more appropriate employment of preaching the gospel and of prayer, was interfered with. It was not, indeed, a business of worldly gain; still it had a distracting influence.

3. *Look ye out among you seven men of honest report*. The large number of the disciples, and of those who needed daily alms, required a considerable number of men, who might consult together, and distribute the bounty in the most suitable manner. These were to be men of *honest report*, that is, men of whom a good testimony could be borne, who were deservedly held in high esteem. The word *honest* is used here not in the limited sense of *mere integrity in business*, but as expressing generally those traits of character which command universal esteem. || *Whom we may appoint, &c.* When the collective body should have made choice of the men, the apostles would, in a becoming manner, set them apart to this business.

4. *But we will give ourselves, &c.* The burden of attending to the relief of the destitute had proved too heavy for the apostles, in connection with their duties of prayer and public instruction in the gospel. Other men could perform this service without endangering the progress of the gospel. Thus the apostles taught the propriety of keeping the spiritual work of the ministry separate from secular cares, and of having certain men in a church on whom the care of the destitute, and probably other pecuniary affairs, should be devolved.

To the arrangement thus introduced by the apostles, is generally traced the office of *deacons* in churches. Though we cannot speak with positiveness on this subject, yet the common belief has much to recommend it. The arrangement appears to have proceeded from the principle, that the ministers of the gospel ought

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch,

6 Whom they set before the

not to be burdened with the secular cares which are inseparable from the welfare of a church. Those cares should, therefore, be committed to a separate class of men. The occurrence of the *particular* exigency in the church at Jerusalem, may have suggested the need of an arrangement which would embrace the *general* subject of providing for the secular concerns of a church, and of assisting ministers on a variety of occasions. Hence a wider sphere of duty than the original necessity required, would soon be found appropriate to the new office — a sphere larger or smaller, according to circumstances, and furnishing, in a great diversity of ways, opportunities of rendering service to the ministers of the gospel, and of advancing the prosperity of a church. The arrangement made in the church at Jerusalem, proved a salutary one; and the experience of this church, we may believe, led to its adoption afterwards wherever churches were formed. Compare Phil. 1:1. The new office became a permanent one. Directions were accordingly given, at a subsequent period, by the apostle Paul, in regard to the character and qualifications of deacons as well as of pastors. See 1 Tim. 3:8—10, 12.

5. *Philip*; the same as is mentioned in 8:5, whose labors as a preacher were so greatly blessed in Samaria. See, also, 21:8. In connection with his services at Jerusalem, he was also an evangelist. || *Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch*; a Gentile, who had resided in Antioch, and who had become a proselyte, or convert, to the Jewish religion. He had subsequently become a follower of Jesus.

6. *They laid their hands on them*. This was a symbolical act among the Jews, used both when the blessing of

apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

God was implored on a person, and when a person was set apart publicly to some office. Compare Gen. 48:14, 16. Num. 27:18, 19. In the present instance, the act was designed, perhaps, to answer both of these purposes. In connection with the laying on of the apostles' hands, the miraculous influences of the Spirit were also sometimes imparted. See 8:18. 19:6. Whether such a result followed on the present occasion, we are not informed; perhaps it was not needed. The men selected were already "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (v. 3), enjoying, it would seem, both the common and the special influences of the Spirit, which had been imparted to the Christian company. Of Stephen, however, one of these men, it is afterwards said (v. 8), that he "did great wonders and miracles among the people." This makes it probable that their spiritual endowments were increased.

NOTICE the devout manner in which the apostles and first Christians proceeded in matters pertaining to the church. Prayer for a divine blessing was interspersed with all their transactions. The spirit of fraternal union, and of kind co-operation, was habitually cherished.

7. *The word of God increased*; spread, and became more efficacious. || *A great company of the priests were obedient, &c.* The conversion of these was eminently worthy of mention, as, from their station and circumstances, they would not embrace the religion of Jesus without most convincing evidence of its being from God, and without a real feeling of its power.

It is worthy of distinct remark,

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called

that the arrangement which had been adopted for quieting complaints and restoring mutual confidence among the Christians, and for enabling the apostles to give themselves, without distraction, to prayer and the ministry of the word, resulted also in a signal increase of the Saviour's followers. Thus does God show us what spirit we must cherish, if we would be instruments of promoting the gospel.

8. *Full of faith and power*; cherishing an unwavering confidence in the Lord Jesus, and signally aided by divine power. Stephen's ability, through divine aid, to work miracles, is particularly intended.

9. *The synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines*. In every considerable city where Jews lived, they erected places of worship, or synagogues. As the Jewish religion required its adherents to appear in Jerusalem at stated times, every year, to attend the great festivals, the Jews who dwelt together in foreign cities, or districts, built for their use in Jerusalem also synagogues, which were named according to the city or district of the proprietors, or in some way descriptive of the owners. Such places for Jewish worship would be required, doubtless, at other times besides the festivals, as so many occasions would arise, both of a public and of a personal nature, for foreign Jews to visit the city. One of these synagogues was called *the synagogue of the Libertines*, that is, *Freedmen*. In explanation of this word, it is necessary to observe that it is of Roman origin. It was the custom of the Romans to reduce to slavery enemies whom they had taken in battle. History informs us that multitudes of Jews thus became reduced to servitude among the Romans. Many persons of this class were also set

the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to

free; and to such freed persons and their children the appellation *libertini, freedmen*, was given. Philo, an ancient Jewish writer of authority, mentions that a portion of territory, belonging to the city of Rome, was expressly set apart for the residence of such Jews. These, as well as other Jews, were in the habit of visiting Jerusalem; and they needed a synagogue for their convenience. Their synagogue was that of the Libertines, or Freedmen. || *Cyrenians*. These were Jews who resided in the region of Libya Cyrenaica, in Northern Africa, and particularly in Cyrene, a large and powerful city of Cyrenaica, a few miles from the Mediterranean, and a resort of large numbers of Jews. They also had a synagogue in Jerusalem. || *Alexandrians*; Jews of Alexandria in Egypt. The city of Alexandria and the surrounding region abounded with Jews, who enjoyed great privileges, both civil and religious. || *Of them of Cilicia*; Jews, living in Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor, of which Tarsus, the apostle Paul's birthplace, was the chief city. See 21: 39. || *And of Asia*. The word *Asia* does not here signify the whole continent, so called. It is used in the New Testament to designate the extensive region which is called *Asia Minor*, and in a narrower sense for that which was called *Proconsular Asia* — a much smaller extent of country, sometimes called *Ionia*, of which Ephesus was the capital. In this narrower sense, the term embraced the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia. The word is here used in this more restricted sense.

Jews residing in all these places had synagogues in Jerusalem for their particular accommodation. Indeed, it is said that there were as many as four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem.

resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against God*.

12 And they stirred up the peo-

10. *They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit, &c.* Stephen, through divine aid, showed a knowledge of religious doctrine, and an ability to apply his knowledge to the occasions which arose, that made him entirely superior to his opponents in argument. The Holy Spirit gave him an effective firmness and zeal. In him was the Saviour's promise verified — “It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” See Matt. 10: 19, 20. We are reminded, too, of our Lord's declaration to his apostles in Luke 21: 15 — “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”

11. *They suborned men*; procured men, by bribery, or other unjust means, to bring a false accusation against Stephen. The same spirit which compassed the death of Jesus, was active in reference to Stephen. Compare Matt. 26: 59, 60. || *Blasphemous words against Moses and against God*; language derogatory to the honor of Moses and of God, tending to diminish the reverence which ought to be felt for Moses and for God. The accusation was a false one, and was procured in an unjust manner. The charge was, probably, grounded on declarations which Stephen had made respecting Jesus (see v. 14), maintaining that he was the Messiah; that Jesus the Messiah, instead of Moses, ought now to be regarded as their spiritual leader; and distinctly announcing the doom which awaited the city, or temple, and the nation, if they persisted in rejecting Jesus. They perverted such declarations, and pretended to consider them

ple, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

as inconsistent with their duty to Moses. They grounded on them, also, a charge of blasphemy against God, because all acknowledged God as having inspired Moses for his office as lawgiver to the Jews. Their professed reverence for Moses was so great, that they would represent as awfully criminal any language, or opinions, that seemed to diminish the honor which had been paid to him. By bringing against Stephen a charge of blasphemy, they evidently sought to have him put to death, under color of the law; for such was the punishment which the law of Moses denounced against blasphemy. See Lev. 24: 16 — “He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him.”

Compare, also, Matt. 26: 65, 66.

12. *They stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes.* Besides exciting the common people, they also sought to excite the passions and ill-will of the chief men, from among whom the members of the sanhedrim were chosen. See 4: 5. Thus they could easily secure an assembling of this court, and hope to obtain Stephen's death with some show of regard to law. || *And brought him to the council*; to the sanhedrim, before which court it was proper that the charge of blasphemy should be brought.

13. *And set up false witnesses.* We need not suppose that these witnesses ascribed to Stephen language entirely different from that which he had spoken. The falsehood in their testimony may have consisted in their not *correctly* reporting his language, and in putting a wrong and unauthorized construction on it; though still they may have intermingled real falsehood

14 For we have heard him say, That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

with truth. || *Against this holy place.* The whole country of the Jews was called *holy*, in distinction from countries inhabited by Gentiles, inasmuch as Gentile lands were polluted by idolatry and numerous vices. Particularly was Jerusalem called *the holy city* (Matt. 4:5); and still more eminently was the temple thus called, as being the seat of religious worship, and the earthly abode of the Deity. It is most likely that these false witnesses meant *the temple* by the words *this holy place*. || *The law*; the law of Moses, in other words, the Jewish religion. Thus they endeavored to excite indignation against Stephen, as a reviler of most sacred things.

14. *For we have heard him say, &c.* Stephen had, no doubt, warned the people, that if they persisted in their opposition to Jesus, their city and temple would be destroyed. Jesus himself had made declarations of the same import. See Matt. 23:37, 38. Luke 19:41-44. Stephen had, we may well believe, maintained that a new order of things as to religion was now commenced; that the sacrifices and other forms of worship which Moses had established, were to cease, and were to be followed by a more spiritual dispensation. Jesus had made similar declarations. See John 4:21-23. A wrong construction, however, was put upon the words of Stephen. They were taken out of their proper connection; a different turn was designedly given to them from what he intended; the form of expression was doubtless altered so as to make the language offensive to the people and to the rulers. Particularly was an endeavor made to show that his language proceeded from contempt of Moses and the Jewish religion, and from dislike of the nation. Language that is perfectly innocent in itself, can, by an unfriendly person, be abused by inserting a word

9*

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

or two, or by giving a shade of meaning that did not originally belong to it, or by altering the connection of words, so as to be quite different in sense from what the original speaker meant. And persons who thus abuse language are as really false witnesses, as if they brought a charge which could not have the least semblance of truth. That a feeling of contempt for Jesus and his followers was cherished by these false witnesses, and that an endeavor was made to excite ill-temper among the persons who heard them, is evident from the manner of expression, as found in the original. Their declaration may be thus literally represented — “We have heard him say, that Jesus, this Nazarene, shall destroy this place,” &c. The odious epithet, *this Nazarene*, was itself enough to provoke the bystanders to malice. In truth, there was among the rulers and some of the people a fixed hostility against the cause of Jesus, however wisely and mildly that cause might be maintained; and only a slight occasion was needed for that hostility to display itself. || *The customs which Moses delivered to us*; the religious practices, which Moses enjoined; the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. The accusation brought against Stephen was, substantially, that he was aiming to destroy the Jewish religion.

15. *The face of an angel.* An angel was conceived of as having an expression of countenance peculiarly noble and dignified. Stephen, arraigned before the chief court of the Jews on a charge of blasphemy, which, by the Jewish law, was punishable with death, in presence of rulers and people who were prejudiced against him, and from whom he could expect no favor, was perfectly self-collected, conscious of no crime, and enjoying the approval of his Saviour. He did not seek to provoke

CHAPTER VII.

1 Stephen, permitted to answer to the accusation of blasphemy, 2 sheweth that Abraham worshipped God rightly, and how God chose the fathers 20 before Moses was born, and before the tabernacle and temple were built: 37 that Moses himself witnessed of Christ: 44 and that all outward ceremonies were ordained according to the heavenly pattern, to last but for a time: 51 reprehending their rebellion, and murdering of Christ, the Just One, who the prophets foretold should come into the

his accusers, or his judges; yet he feared nothing. His serenity and firmness gave a peculiar animation to his countenance, and his whole aspect was that of a man specially aided from heaven. The beholders, unfriendly though they were, could not look on him but with reverence and awe, so unearthly a dignity seemed beaming from his face.

Thus, too, Jesus, in the presence of Pilate, and under accusation by the chief priests and elders, conducted with such self-possession and firmness as excited the Roman governor's amazement. See Matt. 27: 14. The apostle Paul, too, though a prisoner in chains, was so sustained and emboldened by the religion of Christ, as that Felix trembled before him. See Acts 24: 25. The appearance which Stephen exhibited before the sanhedrim, may also remind us of the effect produced on the person of Moses, while on the mount receiving the law from the Lord. When he came down, his face shone, and the people were afraid to come nigh him. See Ex. 34: 29, 30, 35.

How sustaining is the power of religion! How it elevates a person's character! What a difference between Stephen and his adversaries, as to piety and happiness!

CHAPTER VII.

1. *Then said the high priest, &c.* The high priest was, by his office, the president of the sanhedrim, and would therefore call on Stephen to answer to the charge which had been brought against him. 6: 11, 13, 14.

world. 54 Whereupon they stone him to death, who commendeth his soul to Jesus, and humbly prayeth for them.

THEN said the high priest, *Are these things so?*

2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

The inquiry, *Are these things so?* was put to Stephen.

2. *And he said.* Stephen then began to speak in his own defence. His address appears to have been interrupted by the excited and impatient multitude, before he had time to touch the precise points on which he was accused. This circumstance makes it difficult to determine exactly the purpose of Stephen, in minutely detailing the chief facts in the national history from the time of Abraham to the building of the temple by Solomon. Very probably he perceived, from the circumstances in which he was placed, from the appearance of his judges, and from the persecution which was already commenced against the apostles (chapters 4 and 5), that it would be of no use regularly to vindicate himself against the charges which had been made. He might, therefore, have been divinely led to show by historical facts, and particularly by the conduct of the nation at different times towards Moses, that they had frequently been guilty of rejecting the messengers of God. With this general purpose, he also combined a design to rebuke their idolatrous reverence for the temple, suggesting to them, in words from their own Scriptures, that God's honor was quite independent of any earthly temple; and that, even without the splendid temple at Jerusalem, God's honor and worship might still be maintained. He then led his hearers to a direct comparison of their conduct towards Jesus with the conduct of preceding generations, show-

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran. And from thence, when

ing that the spirit of opposition to the Lord's messengers was possessed in an eminent degree also by them. || *Men, brethren, and fathers.* The word corresponding to *men*, was frequently employed among the ancients as indicative of respect for the hearers, and as adapted to excite attention to the speaker. See on 1: 16. With reference to modern practice in addressing an assembly, the word may be here regarded as redundant, and might, in accordance with English idiom, have been omitted in the translation; for Stephen was not addressing three classes of hearers. || *The God of glory*; the glorious God. By using this reverential epithet, Stephen showed that he had not, as the false witnesses had accused him, lost his regard for God, nor was in any degree guilty of blasphemy. || *Our father Abraham.* The Jews were fond of acknowledging their descent from Abraham, as a man eminently chosen of God. They familiarly, though with deep respect, gave him the epithet *father*. See Matt. 3: 9. John 8: 39. Luke 16: 24. || *When he was in Mesopotamia.* Mesopotamia was the country where the ancestors and relatives of Abraham lived. Accordingly, when Abraham directed his servant (Gen. 24: 4), "Thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac," the servant went to Mesopotamia (Gen. 24: 10), unto the city of Nahor, who was Abraham's brother. Gen. 11: 27. || *Before he dwelt in Charran.* The word *Charran* in the New Testament is the same as *Haran* in the Old. Gen. 11: 31. It was a city in the northern part of Mesopotamia, in which Abraham and his company tarried some time, while on their way from their native place to Canaan.

his father was dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell. ~

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as to set his foot on*: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a

3. *And said unto him, &c.* The divine direction here repeated is quoted from Gen. 12: 1.

4. *Came he out of the land of the Chaldeans.* Mesopotamia, mentioned in the second verse, is here meant. Chaldea, or the country of the Chaldeans, was sometimes used in a very extensive sense, as including Mesopotamia. Strictly speaking, Chaldea was the country which lay along the southern part of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The same region appears, on some maps, to be also called *Babylonia*. Further to the north was Mesopotamia; but Chaldea was sometimes used so extensively as to include Mesopotamia. || *Dwelt in Charran*; in Haran. Here Abraham made a temporary sojourn. As Haran was in a remote part of Mesopotamia, or the land of the Chaldeans, and Abraham was on his way out of that land, he is here said, in a general way of speaking, to have come out of it. || *From thence, when his father was dead.* Terah, Abraham's father, died in Haran. See Gen. 11: 32. || *He removed him into this land, &c.* God directed him to remove into the land of Canaan. He accordingly left Haran, and proceeded to Canaan. See Gen. 12: 5.

5. *And he gave him none inheritance in it.* God promised to Abraham that the land of Canaan should become the possession of his descendants, and not properly his own. He said, in Gen. 12: 7, "Unto thy seed will I give this land;" and in Gen. 15: 18, "Unto thy seed have I given this land." || *Not so much as to set his foot on*; or, as we say, not a foot of the land. || *Yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession.* The country might, in a general sense, be called Abraham's by gift from God, since God promised it,

possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so *Abraham* begat *Isaac*, and circumcised him the eighth day; and *Isaac* begat *Jacob*, and *Jacob* begat the twelve patriarchs.

9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold *Joseph* into Egypt: but God was with him,

as it were, to him for his posterity. || *When as yet he had no child.* The promise to *Abraham* that his posterity should possess the land, and that his posterity should be exceedingly numerous, was made before he had a son, and when the prospect of fulfilment to the promise was discouraging. "Behold," said *Abraham* (Gen. 15: 2, 3), "to me thou hast given no seed; and lo, one born in my house [that is, one of my home-born servants] is mine heir." God did not allow the promise, however, to fail. For, in memory of the divine promise that *Abraham*'s posterity should be as the stars for number (Gen. 15: 5), Moses afterwards declared to the Hebrews, "The Lord your God hath multiplied you; and behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude." Deut. 1: 10.

6. *God spake on this wise*; God spake thus. || *That his seed should sojourn in a strange land.* Compare Gen. 15: 13, 14. The residence of the Hebrews in Egypt is here referred to. || *They should bring, &c.*; the people of the foreign land, namely, the Egyptians, would reduce the Hebrews to bondage. || *Entreat*; or, as

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of *Pharaoh* king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But when *Jacob* heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second *time* *Joseph* was made known to his brethren: and *Joseph*'s kindred was made known unto *Pharaoh*.

14 Then sent *Joseph*, and called his father *Jacob* to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So *Jacob* went down into

we now say, *treat*. || *Four hundred years.* Compare Ex. 12: 41.

8. *The covenant of circumcision.* God engaged, or covenanted, with *Abraham* to give him a numerous posterity, and to be in a special sense a God to him and his posterity. This covenant was confirmed by the rite of circumcision on the part of *Abraham* and his descendants. Gen. 17: 4—10. || *The eighth day.* Compare Gen. 17: 12. || *The twelve patriarchs.* The twelve sons of *Jacob* were thus called by way of eminence, as being fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their names are given in Gen. 35: 23—26.

9. *Moved with envy.* The brothers of *Joseph* were excited to envy against him, in consequence of their father's partiality towards him. See Gen. 37: 3, 4. || *Sold Joseph into Egypt.* See Gen. 37: 25—28. || *God was with him.* See Gen. 39: 2, 21.

10, 11. *Delivered him, &c.* See Gen. 41: 38—45, 54.

12. See Gen. 42: 1—3.

13. *Joseph was made known, &c.* See Gen. 45: 1—3, 16.

14. *Then sent Joseph, &c.* See Gen. 45: 17—21. || *Threescore and*

Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, .

16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum

fifteen souls; seventy-five persons. In stating the number as seventy-five, Stephen followed the mode of enumeration which was common among the Jews in his time. For convenience' sake, probably, the custom had arisen of adding to the number of those who actually went down to Egypt, some who were born after that time, as well as the two sons of Joseph. In Gen. 46: 27, it is said, "all the souls of the house of Jacob which came into Egypt were threescore and ten," or seventy. And even in this number are included Joseph and his wife, and their two sons; for in the 26th verse of the same chapter, the number is stated at threescore and six. Though Joseph and his immediate family did not come into Egypt with Jacob, yet they belonged to the number of his descendants, who were settled in Egypt; and thus the whole number amounted to seventy. It probably became customary, in subsequent ages, to associate with those persons who settled in Egypt with Jacob, the two sons of Manasseh, namely, Ashriel and Zelophehad (1 Chron. 7: 14, 15,) and the three of Ephraim, namely, Shuthelah, Ezer, and Elead (1 Chron. 7: 20, 21,) who were born some time after. And thus it became the established practice to speak of the number of Jacob's family in Egypt as being seventy-five.

16. *And were carried over into Sychem.* *Sychem* is the same as *Sichem* (Gen. 12: 6), and *Shechem* (Gen. 37: 12), in the Old Testament. It was a city among the mountains of Ephraim, in the valley between mount Ebal and mount Gerizim. The remark of Stephen does not relate to the burial of Jacob, but to that of the *fathers*, as distinguished from him; for, as we learn from Gen. 49: 29, 30, 50: 13, 23: 19, Jacob was buried in Hebron, not in She-

of money of the sons of Emmor, *the father of Sychem.*

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people

chem. In regard to the patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, there was a current tradition among the Jews that their bodies were conveyed to Shechem, and there buried, with the exception of Joseph's body, which was preserved in Egypt, and was carried away by the children of Israel when they left Egypt for Canaan. See Gen. 50: 25, 26. Ex. 13: 19. The Old Testament gives us no account of the matter. || *The sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor.* *Emmor* is the same as *Hamor* in the Old Testament. Gen. 33: 19. It appears, from Gen. 33: 18, 19, that it was Jacob, not Abraham, who bought land of Hamor, the father of Shechem. Abraham had previously bought land in Hebron from the sons of Heth. Gen. 23: 17—20. Some ancient manuscripts of the Acts have here, instead of the word *Abraham*, the words *our father*, which may refer to Jacob. It is generally thought, however, as most probable, that Luke, the author of the Acts, used neither of these expressions, but wrote simply the word which should be translated *he bought*; and as Jacob is here the chief subject of discourse, it was he who was referred to as having bought the land, according to the account in the Old Testament.

17. *The time of the promise drew nigh.* The promise here referred to may be that made to Abraham in Gen. 12: 7—"Unto thy seed will I give this land;" or, that recorded in Gen. 15: 14, 16—"Thy seed shall come out [from Egypt] with great substance;" and, "In the fourth generation, they shall come hither [to Canaan] again." Compare, also, Gen. 22: 17. || *The people grew, &c.*; as we read in Ex. 1: 7, "The children of Israel—increased abundantly," &c.

grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilely with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up,

18. *Which knew not Joseph*; remembered not with gratitude, nor acknowledged, the nation's obligations to Joseph. This language of Stephen seems to be quoted from Ex. 1: 8.

19. *Dealt subtilely*; craftily, thus plotting for the ruin of the nation. || *So that they cast out*, &c.; so that the Hebrew parents exposed their infants to death. It would seem that Pharaoh, besides the command to cast every infant son into the river Nile, treated the Hebrews with such rigor that, through dread of training up any children to endure their own hard lot, they in some instances abandoned their daughters, also, to death.

20. *Moses was born*, &c. Compare Ex. 2: 2.

21. *And when he was cast out*, &c.; was exposed on the river's bank. Compare Ex. 2: 3—10.

22. *Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*. The Egyptians were at that time distinguished above all nations for proficiency in learning and the arts. It was common, among the writers of antiquity, to call Egypt the mother of wisdom and science. In Solomon's time, Egypt was so eminent for learning, as to be a kind of standard for comparison. Thus, in order to give a just impression respecting Solomon's wisdom, the sacred writer (1 Kings 4: 30) says, his "wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of

and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed his brethren

Egypt." The learned men of Egypt were eminent for attention to astrology, to natural philosophy, medicine, mathematics, &c. Moses was, doubtless, instructed by the Egyptian priests, who held a high rank in affairs of government, as well as in learning, and were greatly honored by the king. || *Mighty in words and in deeds*. This is spoken of Moses while he was yet in favor with the king. He was doubtless an excellent counsellor, and an efficient officer in some parts of the king's service. It seems, from the declaration of Moses, in Ex. 4: 10,—"O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," — that he was not gifted with much ability in speaking, or with eloquence. Still, as a counsellor in public affairs, he may have been exceedingly able, and eminently profitable to the king and the country. The account which Josephus has preserved respecting the early life of Moses, though it has a very fabulous air, had yet, doubtless, a foundation in truth, and shows that he greatly distinguished himself in Pharaoh's service.

23. *It came into his heart to visit his brethren*. Compare Ex. 2: 11, 12.

24. *Smote the Egyptian*; that is, to death, slew him.

25. *For he supposed*, &c. Moses may have already had some intimation of the Lord's purpose to make him a deliverer to his nation. But

would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbor wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land

of Midian, where he begat two sons.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 *Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him,

|| *The land of Midian*; the same as *Midian* (Ex. 2: 15), a region of country in Arabia, east of the northern part of the Red sea. It extended south as far as mount Sinai, and thus included Horeb. See Ex. 3: 1. || *Two sons*; Gershom and Eliezer. See Ex. 18: 3, 4. For a particular account of Moses' marriage with Ziporah, the daughter of the priest of Midian, see Ex. 2: 16—21.

30. *When forty years were expired.* These forty years passed after Moses left Egypt, so that he was now eighty years old. Compare v. 23. The movements of divine providence were apparently slow, and might seem regardless of the grinding oppression which the Hebrews were enduring. But those movements were steadily and surely proceeding to the desired result. God was preparing, in the retirement of Midian, the instrument which was to be exactly fitted for the work; and was allowing the Egyptians, in their mad counsels, to make the yoke intolerable to the Hebrews. When all things were ripe for the deliverance, he speedily effected it.

|| *Mount Sinai.* In Ex. 3: 1, the mount is called *Horeb*. The same mountain had two peaks; one called *Horeb*, the other, *Sinai*. || *An angel of the Lord, &c.* See Ex. 3: 2.

31—34. Compare Ex. 3: 3—10.

33. *Put off thy shoes.* It was in

if not, still the affection and sympathy which he now showed for his countrymen in their affliction, and his interposing in behalf of one of them when abused, he regarded as foretelling a deliverance to be effected by his agency; and, in the ardor of his feelings, he presumed that the Hebrews would generally regard the event in the same light. They knew, in general, from the promises to Abraham, that deliverance would come at some time; and, as one of their number had now been signally avenged and rescued from Egyptian oppression, it would not be unnatural for them to turn their eyes to Moses, as the deliverer of the nation. But their spirits were so crushed by servitude, and hope had been so long deferred, that the idea of deliverance by Moses did not occur to them.

26—28. *The next day, &c.* See Ex. 2: 13, 14. || *Would have set them at one again*; wished to reconcile to one another the two Hebrews who were quarrelling together.

29. *Then fled Moses, &c.* See Ex. 2: 15. The reply which Moses received from his countryman, made him believe that his killing of the Egyptian had, or would, become known to Pharaoh. It would of course excite against him the king's anger. He therefore made his escape from Egypt.

Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses, whom they re-

token of reverence for the divine Being that Moses was directed to put off his shoes, or, rather, sandals. As a sign of reverence it was also usual, in oriental countries, from the earliest ages, for a person to take off his sandals before entering a temple.

34. *I have seen, I have seen.* Such repetitions were employed among the people of the East, as a very intensive way of speaking. The idea is, I am by no means ignorant of my people's affliction; I know it well; and though I may seem to have been regardless of it, yet I have deeply pitied them, and am determined to rescue them.

35. Stephen now proceeds to remind his hearers of the manner in which their forefathers had treated Moses, though he was so evidently commissioned by God to be their deliverer and leader. The design of Stephen appears to have been, to show his hearers their resemblance to a former generation of their people, and to excite fears of the just displeasure of Heaven on them, as it had fallen on their forefathers.—*By the hand of the angel;* by the aid of the angel. An *angel* is a heavenly messenger, by whom God makes communications to men. Hence, in Scripture, when an angel is said to appear, and to deliver a message, God himself is also said to speak; as in v. 30, where an angel is said to have appeared, compared with vs. 31—33, where the Lord himself is represented as speaking. In such cases, it was really a message from God that was delivered by an angel. It was God who spoke through his angel. And if, as is generally supposed, the angel who appeared on special occasions

fused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

was in reality a manifestation of the divine nature of Christ before his coming as man, then there would be an eminent propriety in ascribing to the *Lord* what the *angel* said. Compare Ex. 3: 2 with vs. 4, 6. See also Ex. 32: 34.

36. *Wonders and signs in the land of Egypt;* the miraculous plagues, with which God afflicted the Egyptians. See Ex. chap. 7—12. || *In the Red sea;* the sea, which lies between Egypt and Arabia, and through a part of which the miraculous passage of the Hebrews was made, and in which destruction overtook the Egyptian host while they were attempting also to pass through. See Ex. 14: 21—31. || *In the wilderness;* the Arabian desert, through which the Hebrews passed on their way to Canaan, and in which a great variety of miracles was performed. || *Forty years.* The passage from Egypt to Canaan could have been made in a very short time by a nearer and direct route; but the Hebrews were not sufficiently recovered from that abjectness of spirit which their servitude in Egypt had produced, to encounter the enemies and the difficulties with which they would have had to contend. See Ex. 13: 17. Nor did the route by the way of Sinai require so protracted a stay in the wilderness as actually took place; the people might have reached Canaan, in a comparatively short time even by that route. But when they had come sufficiently near to Canaan, to send spies for gaining information concerning the country and its inhabitants, the spies, with the exception of two men, Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14: 6), brought back a

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the

mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers : who received the lively oracles to give unto us :

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us : for as

discouraging report ; and the people, in their dejection and distrust of God, proposed to return to Egypt. See Num. 13 : 2, 3, 26—29. 14 : 4. In consequence, the Lord condemned them to wander in the desert forty years, till all the adults who came out of Egypt, excepting Caleb and Joshua, should die. See Num. 14 : 29, 33, 38.

37. *This is that Moses which said, &c.* The saying of Moses, here produced, is found in Deut. 18 : 18. Stephen represents Moses as distinctly foretelling the coming of the Messiah in the capacity of a prophet, invested with peculiar authority ; and he thus tacitly warns his hearers of the guilt and danger they incurred by refusing to receive Jesus, who was this prophet. Compare Acts 3 : 22.

38. *This is he* ; this is the same Moses. || *That was in the church.* The word here translated *church* properly signifies an *assembly*, or *collection* of people, and is the same that is translated *assembly* in Acts 19 : 32, 39, and 41. In this passage it means the assembly of the Hebrews at mount Sinai, when the ten commandments were proclaimed. || *With the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai.* In Ex. 19 : 20, where we have the account of Moses' going up mount Sinai, and of the proclaiming of the ten commandments, no mention is made of an angel. Nor in the following chapters of Exodus, in which we read of Moses' receiving communications from God, is there mention of an angel's agency being employed. But as divine communications were generally made through the medium of angels, it became understood among the Jews that God spoke through an

angel when he gave his commands to Moses. See also v. 53 of this chapter. || *The lively oracles.* By *oracles* are meant the communications which God made to the Hebrews by Moses, particularly his precepts and the promises to the obedient. These are called *lively*, as contributing to the life of the soul by revealing God's will and drawing men to true happiness. God employed them as *life-giving instructions* ; and they were preparatory to the gospel of Christ, who was the light and the life of men. John 1 : 4.

39. *Our fathers would not obey.* The Israelites, while journeying in the wilderness, often treated Moses most unworthily, and expressed regret at their having been removed from Egypt. Though Moses had been so great a benefactor to them, and was so evidently under divine guidance, yet, in their discontent, they were often on the point of shaking off his authority. See Ex. 14 : 11, 12. 16 : 3. 17 : 3. Num. 11 : 5. Particularly in Num. 14 : 4, “They said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” See also Num. 21 : 5. Perhaps Stephen dwelt thus minutely on the perverse conduct of the Israelites towards Moses, so that his hearers might be led to see the resemblance between their ancestors in the desert, and themselves as unwilling to submit to the Lord Jesus.

40. *Saying unto Aaron, &c.* Compare Ex. 32 : 1. || *Make us gods ; images of some god.* || *We wot not ;* we know not. The stay of Moses on mount Sinai, receiving communications from God, was the occasion of the people's rash declaration and de-

for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and gave

mand. See Ex. 24: 18. As they gave up the expectation of being further conducted by Moses, their low views of the divine nature led them to seek some visible object in which to confide.

41. *And they made a calf, &c.* See Ex. 32: 4—6. The Hebrews had, in Egypt, become familiar with the sight of images, as representatives of divinities, and as objects of worship. Some of them had, also, as would appear from Ez. 20: 7, 8, 24, actually practised the Egyptian idolatry. They were led, on the occasion here referred to, to make a *calf*, as a symbol of the Deity, by what they had witnessed in Egypt. A principal divinity among the Egyptians was Apis, who was worshipped under the form of an ox. Some suppose that, by this divinity, Osiris was really meant, who had formerly been a king of the nation, and whom they honored as having introduced agriculture into the country, if not as having invented it; and of whom, therefore, they regarded an ox as a fitting representative. In honor of this benefactor, a living bullock was actually made an object of religious veneration in Egypt. A calf was selected for this purpose, from time to time, by the priests, according as certain marks were detected on it, or, more properly, as they were able to fix these marks on it. The animal thus selected was carried to the temple of Osiris, where it was fed and worshipped as a representative of that god, while it lived. The death of the sacred ox, which sometimes occurred in the course of nature, and sometimes was caused by drowning him in the Nile, according to directions in the sacred books, was followed by great lamentation.

them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of forty years in the wilderness?*

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of

tations, as if Osiris had just died. The appearing of another animal with the proper characteristics for being regarded as a deity, was hailed with demonstrations of the greatest joy, as if Osiris was returned to life. || *Offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced, &c.*; kept a festival day in honor of the idol which their own hands had made, instead of honoring and obeying Him who had made them, and had so signally interposed in their behalf.

42. *Then God turned*; turned away from the people in his displeasure. || *And gave them up to worship the host of heaven*; allowed them, in judgment, to take their own evil course, to go on indulging their sinful dispositions, so that they multiplied their idols, and paid homage to the heavenly bodies. || *In the book of the prophets.* The books of the twelve minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, were spoken of by the Jews as one book. Reference is here made to Amos 5: 25—27. || *Have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices? &c.* This language seems, at first, to imply that the Israelites had neglected to offer sacrifices in the wilderness. It is really, however, intended as an acknowledgment that they had offered the appointed sacrifices; and from the accounts in the Old Testament, it is certain that the sacrifices required by Moses were performed. Yet, in connection with these external tokens of homage to God, many of the people secretly honored false gods, and did not, in their hearts, honor Jehovah. His worship was not observed with singleness of intention; idolatrous practices were mingled with it.

43. *Ye took up*; ye carried about

your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and

I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

with you. || *The tabernacle of Moloch.* As the true God had a tabernacle, or sacred tent, made by divine direction (Ex. 25: 8, 9), in which he was specially honored, so the heathen devotees of idolatry had sacred tents, which they regarded as belonging to their false gods. Small representations of such tents, made in honor of Moloch, the Hebrews had in their possession in the wilderness: perhaps they were only small cases, or shrines, in which they might enclose little images of the god.—Moloch was an idol of the Ammonites. This idol was a hollow statue of brass, having the face of a calf or a bull, with arms, like a man's, extended, yet bending forwards. Children were offered to Moloch. They were placed on the arms of the idol, and underneath was a furnace glowing with fire, into which the hapless victims fell. Moses expressly and most earnestly forbade the Hebrews to make their children pass through the fire to Moloch (Lev. 18: 21. 20: 2—5); that is, to burn their children in honor of that divinity. The language of the prophet Amos, and of Stephen, shows that there were worshippers of Moloch among the Hebrews in the wilderness. In subsequent ages (1 Kings 11: 7), there was a place in the vicinity of Jerusalem expressly devoted to his worship; and his dreadful rites were performed by Ahaz, the king (2 Kings 16: 3), and by Manasseh. 2 Kings 21: 6. Subsequently, in the reign of the pious king Josiah, a reformation was introduced, and Topheth, the place which had been devoted to Moloch, came to be viewed with abhorrence, and was desecrated—so to speak—by being made the receptacle of the refuse and filth of the city. 2 Kings 23: 10. Some writers consider Moloch as designed to represent the sun, which is, as it were, the king of the heavens; the word *Moloch*, by its etymology, conveying the idea of royalty. Others state, that the statue of *Saturn* among the Car-

thaginians corresponded to that of Moloch among the Ammonites; and hence, that Moloch was designed to represent the planet *Saturn*, and consequently belonged to the host of heaven—to the planets and stars, which some of the Hebrews worshipped. In honor of this idol, several eastern nations used to sacrifice human victims. This abominable practice arose from a mythological story, that *Saturn* devoured his own offspring. Well might such a god be honored by the destruction of parental affection, and by the shouts and yells with which an infuriate multitude drowned the cries of the hapless innocents! What a diabolical system is idolatry! || *The star of your god Remphan.* The word *Remphan* is used in the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament for the Hebrew word *Chiun*, which was written by the prophet Amos. In consequence of having been adopted into that translation, it was well known to the Jews, and probably was more familiar to them than the original word used by Amos. Stephen therefore employed it. *Chiun* is believed to have been another name for *Saturn*. Probably the same heathen god was signified by each of the names *Remphan* and *Chiun*. He was also worshipped under the image of a star. || *I will carry you away beyond Babylon.* In the book of Amos, we read, *beyond Damascus*. The general idea, however, is the same in both expressions; namely, I will remove you away into a far distant land. It was Stephen's purpose to remind his hearers (in order to excite in their breasts fears as to the consequences of rejecting the Lord Jesus), that the disobedience of their forefathers had met with exemplary punishment in their being carried away into captivity. It was natural, then, that, so many ages after the event, he should mention Babylon, the land of the captivity, rather than Damascus. In being carried away

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45 Which also our fathers, that

to Babylon, the people were removed far beyond Damascus; so that the idea of the prophet was well retained, or, rather, a more impressive view of the divine judgment on the nation was presented. While Babylon was the country to which the Hebrew captives were transported, it was also the case that the ten tribes were removed *beyond* Babylon; and doubtless many of the exiled Jews, as distinguished from the Israelites, or the ten tribes, found their abode *beyond* Babylon. Stephen's object did not require him to quote exactly from the Hebrew prophet in this instance, or in other clauses of this passage.

44. *Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness.* This is the same as is called in the Old Testament *the tabernacle of the congregation.* Ex. 29: 42. It was the sacred tent, the temporary, movable structure, which was made under the direction of Moses, by divine command, for religious services. It was at the door of this tabernacle that God made communications to Moses, and met with the congregation. Ex. 29: 42, 43. The word *witness* is also employed in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The idea conveyed by the term *tabernacle of witness* may be, the tabernacle where God gave his testimony to the authority of Moses as his special minister, and where he communicated instructions for the people. || *As he had appointed;* as God had directed. See Ex. 25: 8. || *According to the fashion that he had seen.* Moses was directed, in Ex. 25: 9, to make the sacred tent 'according to all that the Lord should show him, after the pattern of the tabernacle.' Compare Heb. 8: 5.

45. *Brought in with Jesus;* that is, with Joshua, who was appointed by

came after, brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 Who found favor before God, and desired to find a taber-

the Lord to lead the Hebrews into Canaan after Moses' death. See Josh. 1: 1, 2. The word *Joshua* of the Old Testament, originating in the Hebrew language, becomes *Jesus* when expressed in the Greek language of the New Testament. It may, also, be here incidentally remarked that *Joshua*, the Hebrew leader, is meant by the name *Jesus* in Heb. 4: 8. || *Into the possession of the Gentiles;* the country which, though promised to Abraham's posterity, the Gentiles, the Canaanites, then possessed. The land of Canaan is meant, into which Joshua brought the Hebrews for their permanent residence. || *Whom God drove out, &c.* See Josh. 11: 23. || *Unto the days of David.* Stephen is here speaking of the tabernacle which was made by direction of Moses, and was conveyed under Joshua into the land of Canaan. Being thus brought into Canaan, it remained a sacred tabernacle for the religious services of the nation till the time of David. David, the king, conceived the design of erecting a permanent temple for the Lord. 2 Sam. 7: 2, 3. But being informed by the prophet Nathan, that the Lord chose not to employ him, who had been so much occupied in war (1 Chron. 22: 8), to build a temple, but his son (2 Sam. 7: 12, 13), David contented himself with making large preparations for the contemplated edifice. See 1 Chron. 22d chapter. As preparations were commenced in David's days for building the temple, it might be said, that the tabernacle was the seat of public worship "unto the days of David."

46. *Desired to find a tabernacle, &c.* See 2 Sam. 7: 2, 3, 7. The word *tabernacle* is here used in the general signification of a dwelling, and means

nacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him a house.

48 Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

a fixed abode, in distinction from the movable tabernacle.

47. *But Solomon built, &c.* God had promised that David's son, who should succeed him in the government, should have the honor of building a temple for his worship. See 2 Sam. 7: 12, 13. David, accordingly, made abundant preparation, and specially charged his son Solomon to build a house for the Lord God of Israel. See 1 Chron. 22: 6, 11. Solomon, in the early part of his reign, began the work, and carried it to completion. See 1 Kings 6: 1, 14. 7: 51.

Perhaps, in this part of his address, Stephen was wishing to bring his hearers to a right state of feeling in regard to the temple. One of the accusations against him was, that he had spoken of the temple in a derogatory manner. 6: 14. He now showed them that God had been worshipped in a variety of places, and that more than one structure had been honored with his visible presence. It was not impossible, then, Stephen would perhaps intimate, that the very temple in which they so much gloried might be deserted by the Lord. He wished, perhaps, to excite the thought, that, as a judgment on them for their sins, that edifice might be demolished. He proceeds to hint to them, that in the sight of God a splendid temple is of no avail. God needs no such place for his abode. Worship should proceed from the heart. One splendid temple, they would doubtless recollect, had already been destroyed; namely, that of Solomon, when the people were carried captive to Babylon. The present temple might meet with a similar catastrophe.

48. *The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.* The Most High, being an omnipresent Spirit, needs no temple made by man for

49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

his residence; he cannot be confined within any walls. He is wholly independent of men, having the heaven for his throne and the earth for his footstool. How vain, then, to rely on the temple, splendid to human view though it might be, as a security for the continued care and favor of God, as though he needed such an abode, and was pleased with earthly magnificence! The Jews of former ages seem to have presumptuously relied on the fact of their having a temple consecrated to Jehovah, as a reason for their being kindly regarded by him, and saved from ruin. See Jer. 7: 4, &c. The utter vanity of such reliance Stephen's declaration instantly shows, especially as followed by his quotation from the Jewish Scriptures. It is worthy of remark that the apostle Paul, in his address to the Athenians, introduced the same expression, to give his hearers a just sense of the spiritual nature of the true God. See Acts 17: 24. || *As saith the prophet; Isaiah.*

49, 50. *Heaven is my throne, &c.* The quotation is from Is. 66: 1, 2. The design of the passage is, to show that the Most High is not confined within a temple, nor dependent on men for an abode. The universe is his dwelling. He is every where present. If we would form an idea of the majesty which belongs to him, we may conceive of him as occupying all the heavens for a throne, and the earth for a footstool. How could such a Being be properly regarded as dwelling in a temple, which covers a mere speck of the earth's surface? He himself made all things, too, and is wholly independent of his creatures. || *The place of my rest; the place of my fixed abode.*

51. The remaining part of Stephen's address is so different in its

51 Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have

manner from the preceding, and appears so little connected with it, as to occasion the belief that he was interrupted by signs of impatience and anger on the part of his hearers. It became increasingly evident to him, in all probability, that they were bent on his death, and that it would be of no avail to proceed further, even if they would allow him. He did not, therefore, regularly proceed to apply to the case of his hearers the lessons of warning which the preceding items in the Jewish history would suggest; but, with deep earnestness and undisguised faithfulness, he plainly and solemnly charged on them their opposition to God, and their resemblance to their forefathers, who had distinguished themselves by rebellion against God and persecution of the prophets. As former generations had slain the prophets who had foretold the Messiah's coming, so the present generation, and eminently the members of the sanhedrim, had put to death the Holy One of God. — *Ye stiff-necked; unwilling to submit to God, self-willed, perverse.* || *Uncircumcised in heart and ears;* a Jewish form of expression, meaning *utterly indisposed to obey, and even to hear, the commands of God.* Circumcision was regarded as a sign of moral purity and consecration to God. Stephen's hearers, though they had the sign, yet had not the qualities signified. They were Jews indeed, as to religious rites and ceremonies; but only outwardly. As to their hearts, they were indulging a determined spirit of opposition to the divine will. || *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.* By resisting men who were instructed by the Holy Spirit, and divinely sent to speak the word of God, they virtually and eminently resisted the Spirit himself. Stephen's hearers, and their forefathers, to whom he refers, were destitute of any just

not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers;

sensibility to the claims of religion. They were bent on persecuting the Lord's messengers, and rejecting the instructions and warnings which he had sent them. A thought similar to that which Stephen here expressed, was also employed by the Saviour, when he sent forth the apostles. "He that receiveth you," said he, "receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Hence those that should reject the apostles would be considered as rejecting the Lord himself, as the Saviour declares in Luke 10:16 — "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

52. *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* It was a general fact, in regard to the true prophets, that the Jews had persecuted them. Few, if any, of them had escaped persecution. Stephen did not convey the idea, that in no single instance had the Jews kindly treated a prophet. He spoke of their general conduct. In like manner, our Lord, in Matt. 23:37, characterized Jerusalem — "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killst the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee;" and declared, in Luke 13:33, as showing the hostility which the Lord's servants had encountered in Jerusalem, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of of Jerusalem." || *The Just One;* the Messiah, so called, also, in 3:14.

|| *Ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.* Judas was eminently the traitor; but the sanhedrim and people acted also the unworthy part of betraying Jesus, by delivering up to the Roman power him who was really the Messiah, and whom they ought to have acknowledged as their spiritual king. They were also his murderers, in passing on him sen-

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,

tence of death (Matt. 26: 66), in clamoring for his death, at the hands of Pilate, on false charges (Matt. 27: 20, 22, 23), and in finally prevailing on Pilate to give him up to crucifixion. Matt. 27: 24—26. John 19: 12, 16.

53. *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels*; that is, probably, Who have received the law by an arrangement to which angels were parties. The ministration of angels may be here meant, they having been employed as instruments of communicating the law on mount Sinai. The Mosaic law would thus appear eminently dignified. It proceeded from God, and was delivered by the instrumentality of angels; angels making, or carrying out, the arrangements for its delivery. The Jews were taught to regard God as accompanied with angelic hosts, when he descended to mount Sinai, and as employing them in dispensing the law to Moses. Though in Exodus, 19th and 20th chapters, no mention is made of angels as employed in delivering the law, but the communication appears to have been made directly from God to Moses, yet, in Deut. 33: 2, there would seem to be mention of angelic hosts accompanying the divine Being on that occasion — “ He came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.” It is worthy of mention, also, as a circumstance which would contribute to make the idea familiar, that one of the clauses of this verse in Deuteronomy is translated, in the old Greek version of the Pentateuch, “ At his right hand angels were with him.” The same idea is conveyed by the apostle in Gal. 3: 19, where he says, the law “ was ordained by angels;” and in Heb. 2: 2, where he speaks of the Mosaic law, as “ the word spoken by angels.” This cir-

and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of

circumstance was considered as adding to the solemnity of the scene; and the fact that those heavenly ministers of God were employed on that occasion, and that the statutes of Moses might, therefore, be called *angelic appointments*, seemed to render obedience to the law more obligatory, and consequently greatly to increase the guilt of those who had not kept it.

The address of Stephen, though it ends here, seems to have been interrupted. His hearers would no longer bear his earnest rebukes, but, in the heat of excitement and anger, proceeded to carry into effect what was, doubtless, their settled purpose when they first accused him.

54. *They were cut to the heart*; that is, with anger. They were bitterly enraged.

55. *He, being full of the Holy Ghost*. Divine influence pervaded Stephen’s soul, and strengthened him for the trying scene which was to follow.

|| *Saw the glory of God*. There was presented to the view of Stephen a supernatural splendor, such as was conceived to surround the Deity. One of the most impressive representations of the divine Being is, that he “ dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.” 1 Tim. 6: 16. So the angels who came from heaven to announce the birth of Jesus, were attended with a dazzling brilliancy which struck the shepherds with terror. See Luke 2: 9. || *And Jesus standing on the right hand of God*.

It is customary, in the Scriptures, to speak of the Messiah rather as *sitting* at the right hand of God. See Ps. 110: 1. Matt. 26: 64. Mark 16: 19, &c. The sitting posture was indicative of the judicial and royal power possessed by the Messiah; but when the idea of affording aid, and that immediately, was intended, a *standing* attitude was more suitable.

God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of

Jesus had, as it were, risen up for Stephen's aid.

This earliest martyr to the cause of Christ needed special divine aid, and assurances of the Lord's favor. These were granted him. As he was yet in the flesh, the manifestations which were made, were such as his bodily senses could apprehend. It was through the medium of his sight, that God communicated strength and comfort to his soul. Hence not only did he see a divinely glorious splendor, but had also a vision of Jesus, as standing on the right hand of God. This vision of Jesus was granted to Stephen, to assure him of the all-sufficient aid which Jesus would impart. The Saviour would not desert him in the hour of need; the right arm of God would be extended in his behalf. Thus sustained by Omnipotence, he could brave death even in a most appalling form. It occasionally happened to the favored servants of God, in ancient times, when circumstances required it, that God specially influenced their souls and their bodily powers, and, in a manner adapted to their bodily state on earth, disclosed to them spiritual realities. How this was done, we know not; excepting that it was, no doubt, by a miraculous interposition. He that made man can never be at a loss for methods of operating on the soul, whether through the bodily organs or without them. It may be interesting to compare with this instance of Stephen, the vision of Jerusalem which was presented to the prophet Ezekiel, while he was in his house in Babylon. See Ez. 8: 1—4. Compare, also, Is. 6: 1—4. Rev. 4: 2—4.—If we are ever called to extreme suffering for righteousness' sake, we may hope for some peculiar sense of our Lord's favor. We may confidently believe, that the Spirit of glory and of God will rest on us. 1 Pet. 4: 14.

56. *I see the heavens opened.* To

man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears,

the view of Stephen, there was a parting asunder of the sky, so that he looked, as it were, far beyond, up to the abode of God. Compare Matt. 3: 16. || *And the Son of man*; that is, Jesus. Jesus often spoke of himself under this appellation. He probably used it as a term of humility, intimating the lowly condition in which he was, while dwelling on earth. The disciples and apostles were in the habit of calling him *the Son of God*, rather than the Son of man. It was, however, on the present occasion, a very appropriate term. It served to contrast Jesus *in glory* with Jesus *on the cross*, and that in presence of the very men who had been chiefly instrumental in his crucifixion, and who had heard him say, "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." Luke 22: 69. It was an affecting and most solemn profession, too, of the Messiahship of Jesus, harmonious with declarations which the people and the rulers had often before heard from the apostles. Compare 2: 33. 3: 13. 4: 10. 5: 31.

57. *Then they cried out*, &c. Whether any formal decision was pronounced by the sanhedrim, or not, is not plain. There probably was none. The scene, as here described, seems most to agree with the opinion, that the multitude, in an infuriated state, wished to take summary vengeance on Stephen. His life could not, indeed, have been legally taken, even if the sanhedrim had passed sentence on him, unless the Roman governor's sanction had been obtained. It would probably have been difficult to obtain this; and, even if an effort for this might have been successful, the Jewish rulers wished for no delay in getting rid of Stephen. So relentless and headstrong is the spirit of persecution, that the members of the sanhedrim, doubtless, connived at the illegal proceedings

and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young

of the multitude, even if they did not encourage them. || *Stopped their ears*; so as to hear nothing more from him, as though he was a blasphemer, whom it would be exceedingly criminal to hear. By this symbolical act, they expressed their detestation and abhorrence of Stephen, and excited one another to deeper malice. In a similar spirit, the high priest, in order to excite against Jesus to the highest pitch the feelings of the Jews, rent his own garments, as in token of pious abhorrence at the blasphemy which he falsely declared Jesus had uttered. See Matt. 26:65.

58. *And cast him out of the city.* The customs of the Jews would not allow the stoning to take place in the city. || *The witnesses*; the false witnesses mentioned at 6:13. || *Laid down their clothes.* The witnesses laid aside their outer garments, so as not to be hindered by them in casting the stones. The outer garment was a kind of mantle, thrown around the body in such a way as would naturally hinder the free action of the arms; and the stones employed on such an occasion were very large. According to the law of Moses (Deut. 17:7), "the hands of the witnesses" were to be the first that should cast stones on one who was to be thus put to death. Though the whole transaction was illegal, yet, as might be expected, there was a strange mingling of regard to the law of Moses, and of disregard to all law, human and divine. || *At a young man's feet whose name was Saul;* afterwards the apostle Paul. How differently employed, alas! from the manner in which his instructor Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) would have advised him! Compare Acts 5:34, 38, 39. Willing as he then was to do any service, however small, to the disadvantage of the Christian cause, he afterwards reflected on his conduct with heartfelt grief. See Acts 22:20. This first notice of Saul is extremely

man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

unfavorable in regard to his character; but he was to become a monument of divine grace. He is here called a *young man*. This term and kindred ones were anciently used with greater latitude than among us. In Paul's Epistle to Philemon (v. 9), he calls himself *aged*. That epistle is generally believed to have been written about the year 60 of the Christian era; and the martyrdom of Stephen may be placed in the year 34. If Paul was between sixty and seventy years of age when he wrote to Philemon, he was between thirty and forty at the death of Stephen. The term *young man* was anciently applied to men in the flower of their age, as old certainly as forty, as well as to younger persons.

59. *Calling upon God, and saying.* The word *God* was supplied by the translators, as is indicated by its being printed in Italics. A literal rendering would have been, "Invoking [or praying] and saying." Stephen invoked, or called upon, the Lord Jesus, commanding to him his departing spirit. Thus this dying martyr, filled with the Holy Spirit, had such views of the Saviour as to pay him religious homage. His prayer, proceeding from a divine influence, was acceptable to the Majesty of heaven. This example of Stephen encourages us to pray to our Saviour. Indeed, it was so customary among the primitive Christians to offer prayer to Christ, that they were denominated *those who call on Christ*. Compare 1 Cor. 1:2. Acts 9:21. 22:16. || *Receive my spirit*; receive me into the abodes of the blessed. Jesus had encouraged his disciples to expect mansions of rest. John 14:2. He had spoken of everlasting habitations (Luke 16:9), and had represented Lazarus as gone to be an associate with Abraham. Luke 16:22. Compare, too, Luke 23:43. Compare this petition with that which Jesus uttered, when just

60 And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

1 By occasion of the persecution in Jerusalem, the church being planted in Samaria, 5 by Philip the deacon, who preached, did miracles, and baptized many, among the rest

about to expire on the cross (Luke 23 : 46) — “Father, into thine hand I commend my spirit.” How sustaining was Stephen’s confidence in the divine Saviour! and how elevated was he, by the vision he had enjoyed, above the fear of death, and the dread of any suffering or ignominy. Stephen’s language shows, too, his expectation of being *at once* received into a state of bliss. His spirit was not to pass into a state of inaction and unconsciousness, but was to be received by his faithful Saviour, and welcomed to a glorious condition.

60. *And he kneeled down.* With what composure and devotion was Stephen enabled to meet the rage of his murderers! || *Lay not this sin to their charge.* Stephen’s petition was conceived and uttered in the same spirit as our Lord’s, when he was about to expire. “Father, forgive them,” prayed he; “they know not what they do.” Luke 23 : 34. The spirit of true religion is eminently a forgiving spirit. It leads us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us. See Matt. 5 : 44. It is hardly necessary even to hint, how eminently superior were the conduct and the spirit of Stephen to those of duellists, who kindle into revenge, and seek for blood as a reparation for offences, which are often merely imaginary, no evil having been intended, and no real injury inflicted. And how truly glorious is Stephen’s death-scene, when compared with that of warriors on the battle-field, dying in the indulgence of fell revenge and malice, forsaken by man, and indisposed to seek the pres-

Simon the sorcerer, a great seducer of the people : 14 Peter and John come to confirm and enlarge the church : where, by prayer and imposition of hands giving the Holy Ghost, 18 when Simon would have bought the like power of them, 20 Peter sharply reproving his hypocrisy and covetousness, and exhorting him to repentance, together with John preaching the word of the Lord, return to Jerusalem. 26 But the angel sendeth Philip to teach and baptize the Ethiopian eunuch.

ence and aid of the Saviour! Who does not involuntarily exclaim, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his”? Num. 23 : 10. || *He fell asleep.* Appropriate language to describe a believer’s death! The body, undergoing dissolution, is to remain only for a season under the power of death; for, at the appointed time, it will be raised incorruptible. The repose which a wearied body enjoys in sleep, is also a fit emblem of the rest and refreshment into which the Christian’s spirit enters when dismissed from the body. Absent from the body, it is present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5 : 8), and enjoys the bliss of paradise. Luke 23 : 43. Eminently applicable was this expression to the case of Stephen, when, from the rancor and cruelty of the Jewish tribunal, and from the scene of stoning, he passed to the mansion of rest which his Lord had prepared for him!

The figure of *falling asleep* has been very extensively employed to signify *death*; either as a soothing mode of representing what to men in general is associated with gloom, or as an expression of belief that death’s dominion over the body is only temporary. Hence places for the interment of the dead have been called *cemeteries*; that is, according to the etymology of the word, *sleeping places*.

CHAPTER VIII.

In the preceding seven chapters, the reader’s attention has been confined to events which occurred in the city of Jerusalem; for thus far the operations of the church appear to

AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

have been confined to the city. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the persecuting spirit, which had already so often attempted to silence the apostles, became more decided, and even unrelenting. It prevailed to such an extent, that the Christians were induced in large numbers to leave the city (8: 1, 4), and go abroad even beyond their own country. 11: 19. But the persecution, which was designed to crush the rising cause of the gospel, was overruled into an occasion of its rapid advancement ; for the followers of Christ, wherever they went, made known the gospel, and multitudes were, in consequence, converted to Christ. The history, therefore, now conducts us to regions beyond Jerusalem, after briefly stating the fact that bitter persecution began to rage in the city.

1. *And Saul was consenting unto his death* ; to Stephen's being violently put to death. Saul not barely *consented* to this murderous deed, but the word used in the original shows that he approved of it. He was willing to be known as really participating in the transaction. See 7: 58. || *There was a great persecution* ; there arose a great persecution. || *They were all scattered abroad*. The word *all* is doubtless here used in a general sense, meaning, in popular language, *very many*. As many of the members of the church, no doubt, as conveniently could, removed from the city, to avoid the fury of their enemies. Still, not a few must have remained, whose circumstances did not permit their removal. || *Samaria* ; the region just north of Judea. || *Except the apostles*. They remained, so as to watch over the remnant of the church, to consult together, and to hold themselves ready

2 *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

3 *As for Saul*, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed *them* to prison.

4 *Therefore they that were scat-*

for any service which divine providence might appoint. They enjoyed the special protection of heaven. God could either wholly repress, or limit, the spirit of persecution, or deliver from its rage, just as it seemed best to him.

2. *Devout men carried Stephen* ; &c. Whether these were believers, or well-disposed and serious-minded Jews, does not appear. The term *devout* is elsewhere applied to Jews who might be called *religious Jews*, who were not yet decided Christians. See 2: 5. Compare 10: 2. In all probability, there were many Jews in Jerusalem, who, while they were not decidedly in favor of the Christian cause, were yet unfriendly to violent methods of seeking its destruction, who acknowledged the excellence of Stephen's character, and were, perhaps, secretly well disposed to the new religion. Some such men, in union, doubtless, with some Christians, took upon themselves the care of Stephen's funeral. || *Made great lamentation*. Distinguished honor was paid to Stephen's memory. He had been highly esteemed. There were those who deeply lamented his death, and willingly bore testimony to his worth.

3. *He made havoc of the church* ; or, to use Paul's own language in Gal. 1: 13, he "persecuted the church and wasted it," sought to destroy it. Impelled by a blind rage against the disciples of Christ, and an ignorant zeal for Judaism, which, in distinction from Christianity, he regarded as the cause of God, he sought every means to harass the Christians and bring the church to nought. || *Entering into every house* ; going from house to house. || *Haling* ; violently

tered abroad went every where preaching the word.

5 Then Philip went down to the

apprehending Christians, and, as it were, dragging them before the magistrates, or to prison. In the proceedings here stated, Saul did not act on his own authority. He was empowered, as he himself states in Acts 26:10, by the chief priests. These men, by virtue of their office, and as belonging to the sanhedrin, regarded it as their duty to prevent the spread of religious errors. They therefore authorized Saul to search out and bring to trial, or lodge in prisons, any who had become attached to the cause of Jesus. Under cover of this authority, he went from house to house, searching for Christians, and violently committed to prison women as well as men. The extremity of the persecution is shown by the fact of women's being made the subjects of it, as well as men, in this violent way. That some were put to death through the agency of Saul, would appear from his declaration in 22:4—"I persecuted this way unto the death." Compare, too, 26:9, 10.

4. *Went every where*; spread themselves abroad far and wide, through various regions. They did not confine themselves to the Jewish territory; but, as we learn from 11:19, went as far as Phenicia, the island of Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria. By removing beyond the Jewish territory, they would, of course, be less in danger of being pursued by the hostility of the chief priests, and might hope to enjoy comparative security. Besides, Jews were residing in all the neighboring countries, and, though not in their own land, these converted Jews could yet be among their countrymen, and have opportunities of communicating to them a knowledge of Christ. They were not yet sufficiently advanced in the doctrine of Christ, to know that Gentiles, as such, were to be favored with the gospel, as well as Jews. Hence it was their purpose to go where Jews could be

city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

6 And the people with one ac-

found in Gentile territories. Among the common people of the Jews, too, they might reasonably hope for a sympathy and a willingness to listen to the claims of Jesus, which they would in vain hope for from Jews who were in authority, or those who were so much under the influence of leading men as were the inhabitants of Palestine.

5. *Philip*; one of the seven, who were appointed to manage the distribution of money for the indigent. 6:5. He was also, as we learn from 21:8, an evangelist, or preacher. It was not Philip the apostle; for the apostles, we are informed in the first verse of this chapter, remained in Jerusalem; and the apostles are mentioned in v. 14, in distinction from Philip. || *The city of Samaria*. There was a city thus named, as well as a division of the country of Palestine. The city of Samaria was built by Omri, king of Israel. 1 Kings 16:24. It was situated nearly in the centre of Palestine. It became the metropolis of the Israelitish kingdom, that is, the kingdom of the ten tribes, after they had separated from the other two, Judah and Benjamin, and formed a distinct government under Jeroboam. See 1 Kings 12:16, 19. This city was several times destroyed and rebuilt. It was at length enlarged and adorned by Herod the Great, and named by him *Sebaste*, in honor of the Roman emperor Augustus; the word *Sebaste* being the Greek corresponding to the Roman *Augusta*, or *venerable*. Its original appellation, however, *Samaria*, seems to have been still retained as the more common, or popular, name. || *Preached Christ to them*; preached the gospel to them. That Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah, was the chief topic of instruction in those early times. If Jesus was received as the Messiah, his religion would be embraced. Though the Jews did not acknowledge the Samaritans as,

cord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them* : and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

properly speaking, their countrymen, yet Philip would feel authorized to communicate to them the gospel, because Jesus himself had taught in the country of Samaria, (John, 4th chapter), and because, as appears from Acts 1: 8, Samaria had been expressly named by him as a region in which his religion was to be published. The inhabitants of Samaria, as well as the Jews themselves, were expecting the advent of the Messiah, and were therefore in a favorable state for hearing a minister of Christ. Compare John 4: 25, 39—42.

7. *Unclean spirits, crying with loud voice* ; doubtless in a manner similar to that of which mention is made in Mark 1: 23—26, where we learn that a man with an unclean spirit cried out to Jesus, saying, “Let us alone,” &c. || *And many taken with palsies* ; or many paralytics. Under the general name of *palsy*, several infirmities were comprehended. Sometimes apoplexy was meant, which affected the whole body, and sometimes a paralysis of parts of the body. A contraction of the muscles was sometimes meant, by which, if a person’s hand, for instance, was extended when the contraction seized him, he was unable to draw it back ; if not extended, he became unable to extend it. The limb would consequently become withered, and would be sometimes turned in, and sometimes out, in the same position as when the person was first seized with the disorder.

8. *And there was great joy*, &c. Philip had, by his miraculous power, restored sick persons and demoniacs, and had thus conferred on the city

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one :

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

great temporal good. By introducing the gospel, he had also signally contributed to the people’s spiritual welfare ; and many had, through his agency, become true converts to Christ. There was, therefore, abundant cause for joy in the city.—Those who really believe in Christ, are entitled to rejoice with joy unspeakable. 1 Pet. 1: 8. Compare Matt. 9: 2. Rom. 5: 11.

9. *A certain man, called Simon*. It is generally thought that this is the same Simon of whom Josephus, in his Jewish Antiquities (20. 7. 2.), makes mention, as a distinguished magician. He was a Jew, a native of Cyprus, and was a man who could easily be bought for vile purposes. || *Used sorcery* ; practised magic arts. He was probably one of those who, by their acquaintance with some of the natural sciences, and with the imaginary science of astrology, were able to deceive the people, pretending that their wonderful performances were miracles, that they were able to tell men’s fortunes by the aspect of the stars, and to cure diseases by incantations and other imposing practices. || *Bewitched the people* ; filled the people with wonder, and deluded them into a senseless admiration of his power. They were wholly taken up with his witchery. || *Giving out that himself was some great one* ; pretending to be endowed with superhuman powers, to be eminently aided by God.

10. *This man is the great power of God*. That is, the almighty power of God operates through this man. Thus they were led to regard him as having a most intimate connection

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed

with the Deity, and as having power seriously to affect men's destinies.

11. *He had bewitched them with sorceries*; he had amazed them, and, as it were, taken away their senses by his pretended supernatural powers.

12. *Concerning the kingdom of God*; or the gospel. The use of the phrase *kingdom of God* to signify the gospel, arose from the manner in which the ancient Jewish prophets spoke of the expected Messiah. He was to be a great king, and to have a government over men. His government was to be eminently divine, established by God himself, and bringing men into subjection to him. Thus God was to reign in the hearts of men by making them righteous, and was thus to prepare them for heaven. *The kingdom, or reign, of God* thus came naturally to signify the Messiah's administration, or the gospel, by which men are turned to righteousness, and become subjects of God. Philip announced that the Messiah was come and had commenced his reign, and he showed that Jesus was the Messiah. He therefore made known the duties of repentance, of faith in the Lord Jesus, and obedience to him. || *They were baptized*. So had Jesus commanded. He directed his apostles (Matt. 28: 19) to go forth "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Compare Mark 16: 16. Thus, too, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 38), those who believed in Jesus were baptized. || *Both men and women*; those men and women who professed to believe. Believers in Christ, and none but

also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15 Who, when they were come

professed believers, are, in accordance with our Lord's commission to the apostles, to be baptized. See Matt. 28: 19. Mark 16: 16. There is no evidence in the New Testament that any were baptized by the apostles and their associates, who did not make a personal profession of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

13. *Then Simon himself believed also*. He professed to believe, and was thought to be sincere; and thus, in accordance with his pretension, and with appearances, he is said to have believed. He was intent on making money, and on being held in high esteem among the people; and, as they were now attaching themselves to Philip, and becoming Christians, he thought it for his interest to go with them, else he would lose their regard, and the opportunity to enrich himself. He had no right views of the doctrine which Philip had taught, but, probably, supposed that Philip had some secret art like his own, only a more powerful one. Or, knowing that his own profession of being aided by a supernatural power was a mere pretence, he may have supposed that Philip had found out in what way supernatural aid could be really procured; for he, doubtless, saw that the wonderful works which Philip performed, were altogether different from such as he could do. By connecting himself with Philip, on profession of believing his doctrine, he hoped to discover the secret. || *He continued with Philip*. He constantly attended on Philip, professing a most devoted attachment to him, and desiring increased instruction. || *And wondered*.

down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles'

He was *amazed* at what he foolishly regarded as more successful sorcery than his own.

14. *The apostles, which were at Jerusalem.* The apostles still remained in the city. See v. 1 of this chapter. || *They sent unto them Peter and John.* The presence of some of the apostles was highly desirable at this introduction of the gospel, to give a right direction to affairs, and to confer on the believers the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit.

15. *That they might receive the Holy Ghost.* The extraordinary influences of the Spirit, by which the primitive believers were enabled to speak in other languages besides their own, and with peculiar power and earnestness to testify to the truth, are here meant. The apostles were divinely empowered to communicate the gift of the Spirit in connection with prayer and the laying of their hands on the believers. See v. 18. The enlightening and converting influences of the Spirit had already been granted to the Samaritans, in connection with Philip's preaching.

17. *Then laid they their hands on them, &c.* The solemn laying of hands on persons was frequently in use among the Hebrews, from very early times, in connection with prayer for a divine blessing, and was continued by our Saviour and the apostles. See Matt. 19:13. Acts 6:6. 28:8. It was the appointed act, in connection with which the gifts of the Spirit were granted. These gifts were usually bestowed on the early believers after baptism, as a divine attestation to the truth of the gospel,

hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

for confirming believers and convincing unbelievers.

19. *Give me also this power, &c.* The worldly ambition and crafty policy of Simon began now to be manifest. He had no true knowledge of the nature and design of the gospel, but rather regarded it as an art, the power of operating in which was a secret possessed by the apostles. And of the Holy Spirit he seems to have had no other idea, than of a power to perform supernatural operations. There is no reason to suppose, from the narration, that Simon had received the imposition of the apostles' hands. Divine providence had, doubtless, so ordered the matter, that his true character was detected too soon for this rite to be performed on him. The apostles laid their hands, probably, for the sacred purpose, on different individuals at different times.

20. *Thy money perish with thee, &c.* The apostle was filled with holy indignation at Simon's proposal; and, in as strong terms as language could furnish, he expressed his abhorrence of the proposal, and his sense of the imminent danger to which Simon was exposed; as if he had said, Thou art in the way to perdition; and let thy money go with thee, rather than that I should take it for the unworthy purpose thou intendest. The apostle's language is not an imprecation of vengeance on a fellow-man, but rather the expression of abhorrence at Simon's consummate wickedness, and an utter disavowal of connection with such a man, together with a solemn warning of the end to which such conduct, if

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if per-

not abandoned, would inevitably lead. Simon's proposal was not only fraught with wickedness, but showed, likewise, an entirely erroneous conception of the subject; as if a free gift was to be purchased, and as if money could avail in procuring a gift of God.

21. *Neither part nor lot in this matter*; the whole matter, or subject, of which they were speaking; namely, the blessings which Christ confers, and the extraordinary manifestations of the divine favor. Particularly could such a man have no part in the ability to bestow supernatural influences. He had proved himself to be a mere pretender to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. Such hypocrisy as Simon had manifested, would rather meet with stern rebuke from God.

22. *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, &c.* His proposal implied a reproach on God and the gospel, and its sinfulness demanded heartfelt sorrow, and renunciation of so impious a design as that of purchasing from man, and for vile purposes too, a gift of God, which was intended for most noble and solemn purposes. If Simon was truly humbled, and would penitently turn from his unholy aims, he was encouraged to pray for forgiveness. And yet so aggravated was his guilt, and so rooted in him his wickedness and craft, that true repentance was very unlikely to occur, and hence his forgiveness was very questionable. The apostle, probably, had in mind the Saviour's declaration — “Whosoever blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness.” Mark 3: 29. As our Lord had reference, in this declaration, to the unspeakable guilt of his adversaries in ascribing his miracles to the power of Satan, and as Simon probably regarded the apostles as being in league with the evil one, and thus able to perform their wonderful

haps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in the bond of iniquity*.

deeds, or, at least, as operating by some system of trickery, there was a striking resemblance between the two cases; so that forgiveness was very questionable. Simon knew that he himself made only pretences to supernatural power, and thus deceived the people. He ought to have known that such works as followed the apostles' laying on of hands could proceed not from any human art, nor from diabolical influence. To trace the power of performing these works to any such source, or to regard it as subject to human will, so as to be capable of being bought and sold, was, therefore, extremely dishonorable to God. And yet the apostle would present the possibility of forgiveness, and would exhort to repentance and prayer. The case was not wholly desperate, however discouraging; for Simon had not, probably, heretofore had much religious knowledge. By showing, too, the enormity of his guilt, in itself considered, the apostle sought deeply to affect his mind, and to excite within him serious reflection. — The apostle's direction to Simon clearly shows that prayer without repentance can be of no avail. It is in connection with godly sorrow for sin, and with forsaking sin, that prayer for pardon is an acceptable offering to God.

23. *Thou art in the gall of bitterness, &c.* Gall, gall of the most bitter quality, is here used as an emblem of exceedingly great wickedness; as if the apostle had said, in simple language, Thou hast sunk into the deepest wickedness. The expression corresponds very nearly to that of Moses in Deut. 29: 18, when he wished to show the utter abhorrence with which the sin of idolatry ought to be viewed — “Lest,” said he, “there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood.” Distasteful as is gall, or wormwood, to

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusa-

man, so, Moses intimates, is idolatry abhorrent to God. *To be in the bond of iniquity* is, probably, the same as *to be fast bound by iniquity*. The apostle wished to show, in strong terms, the extreme wickedness of Simon. He was no common sinner, in thus dishonoring the Holy Spirit; he had fallen into deep wickedness, and become fast bound in iniquity.

24. *Then answered Simon, &c.* The sorcerer was struck by the solemn and earnest manner in which the apostle had addressed him; and his fears were aroused. || *Pray ye, &c.* He doubtless presented this request to both of the apostles, Peter and John, and perhaps to others standing by. We read nothing more of this man in the New Testament. The reason for his request that the apostles would pray for him, was not of an encouraging character. He was moved by fear only, not by love. He dreaded the consequences of his evil course, and sought only deliverance from perdition. But if we pray, or seek the prayers of others, only through fear of what is threatened against sin, there is little hope in our case. Even Pharaoh, when under the dread of God's judgments, begged the prayers of Moses. See Ex. 8: 28. If the Simon of whom Josephus makes mention were the same man as this, it is evident that he was actuated by no higher considerations than fear of perdition, and that this fear soon forsook him; for he continued the same course of life. According to some early Christian fathers, he addicted himself to magic, after this, more than before, fell into various abominations, and became a notorious opposer of Christianity. From the name of this man, it may not be amiss here to mention, arose

lem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

the word *simony*, which signifies the crime of buying and selling stations of trust and influence in the church.

The account respecting Simon suggests several important thoughts:

1. From the beginning, there have been insincere professors of religion among Christians. v. 21. There was a Judas among the twelve disciples.

2. A truly pious man cannot contemplate a sinful course but with dread and abhorrence. v. 20. Compare Ps. 119: 136, 158.

3. If we would enjoy the favor of God, the heart must, first of all, become right in his sight. v. 21.

4. Beware of proceeding in sin so far that it can only be said, *if perhaps* thou mayest be forgiven. v. 22.

5. The intercessions of good men in our behalf, though it may be right to seek them, are yet useless without our personal repentance and prayers v. 22. They will even be an occasion of injury to us, if we presumptuously rely on them, instead of immediately surrendering ourselves, in true penitence, to the Lord Jesus.

25. *Preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.* They did this while on their way to Jerusalem.

26. *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, &c.*; properly, *an angel*. Whether an angel appeared in a vision, as one appeared to Cornelius (10: 3), or conveyed the message in a dream, as one did to Joseph, husband of our Lord's mother (Matt. 1: 20. 2: 13), or in some other way, we have not the means of determining. Nor is it important to determine. Suffice it, that a heavenly messenger gave Philip an intimation of God's will. || *Gaza.* Gaza was

27 And he arose, and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

about sixty miles south-west of Jerusalem. It was a very ancient city, and was, in remote ages, of much importance, as being near the southern boundary of the Canaanitish territory, and a frontier defence against Egypt, being the last city of Canaan in the direction of Egypt. See Josh. 15: 47. It was one of the five principal cities belonging to the Philistines. It was laid waste by Alexander the Great, but was afterwards rebuilt. It subsequently came into the power of the Egyptians, but was wrested from them, and destroyed by the Jewish prince Alexander Janneus, ninety-eight years before Christ. It was, however, again rebuilt. The Roman emperor Augustus gave it to Herod the Great; and after Herod's death, the government of Gaza was assigned to the ruler of Syria. || *Which is desert.* It is not certain whether these words refer to the city, or to the road. The most probable opinion is, that they relate to the road. There appears to be historical evidence that the city was not desolate at the time here spoken of; and, though it was subsequently sacked, namely, not long before the siege of Jerusalem, yet its overthrow took place after the time when this book was written. These words may be considered, not as the language of the angel to Philip, but as that of the sacred historian; and they were, perhaps, intended as a passing geographical remark, suggested, it may be, by the circumstance that a zealous preacher of the gospel was directed to go on an unfrequented road, rather than on one where he would be likely to fall in with many persons, or which would lead him through many inhabited places. It has been supposed, though without authority, that there were two roads from Jerusalem to

28 Was returning; and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to

Gaza; and that the writer intended to show which of the two Philip took. The region through which the road passed, was a *desert*; that is, according to the scriptural use of the term, a thinly-inhabited region.

27. *A man of Ethiopia, &c.* The country here mentioned was in Africa, south of Egypt, and was also called *Meroë* — the name, likewise, of its chief city. This country was governed by a succession of females, who, in common, bore the name *Candace*; just as *Pharaoh* was a name common to the kings of Egypt, and *Cesar* to the emperors of Rome. The description here given of this man shows that he was a high officer of state in the queen's employ, and particularly that he was her treasurer. From his having gone to Jerusalem to worship, it appears that he had become, at least, a proselyte to the Jewish religion, if he were not a Jew by birth. Many Jews were at that time residing in Egypt and Ethiopia.

28. *Read Esaias the prophet.* The Jews, when on a journey, used to employ the time in reading their Scriptures. One of their rabbins enjoined that a Jew, on a journey, when without a companion, should study the law.

29. *The Spirit said unto Philip.* God communicated a knowledge of his will in a variety of ways. An angel directed Philip to go on this journey. Now, the Spirit of God directed him to go near to the chariot which he saw. The Spirit speaks by conveying thoughts to the mind, and deeply impressing them there. Philip felt an irresistible impulse to go to the chariot and converse with the traveller; and he knew that he was divinely directed to do so. || *Join thyself to this chariot.* The chariot is

him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? and he desired Philip that he would come up, and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture

here put, by a usual figure, for the person who was in it. Philip was directed to go up to the chariot, and join company with its occupant.

30. *Heard him read.* It was customary for the Jews, when thus at leisure on a journey, to read their Scriptures aloud. Philip had now come sufficiently near to distinguish what the person was reading.

The special providence which had sent Philip to a comparatively desert region of country, though doubtless he would have been glad to visit thickly-settled places, and there to be proclaiming the gospel to multitudes, deserves to be particularly noticed. This Ethiopian grandee (as Doddridge appropriately calls him), having gone up to Jerusalem for a religious purpose, had doubtless heard of Jesus. But his mind was yet in a comparatively uninformed and undecided state respecting him. His attention was now occupied with a prophecy of Isaiah's concerning the Messiah, and he felt an anxious desire to understand it. Just at this juncture, a minister of the Lord Jesus makes acquaintance with him, and seems, on his part, desirous to afford the needed instruction. || *Understandest thou what thou readest?* The very question implied not only an interest on Philip's part in the individual's spiritual welfare, but also a profession of being able to teach him. The whole appearance of Philip was, doubtless, such as favorably impressed the Ethiopian's mind in respect to his ability to guide him.

31. *How can I, except, &c.* The inquiry is an ingenuous acknowledgment of ignorance. Feeling his need of a teacher, and discovering in Philip signs of ability to instruct him, he

which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for

requested Philip to take a seat with him in his chariot.

32, 33. *The place of the Scripture which he read, &c.* The passage is found in Is. 53: 7, 8. The language, as here quoted, differs slightly from that which we find in the Old Testament. The sacred historian, Luke, gives us, almost exactly, the words which are found in the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures — a translation which was in frequent use among the Jews of his time, and was doubtless employed by the Ethiopian grandee. || *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, &c.* The idea is, that the person described, namely, the Messiah, submitted patiently, without murmuring, to ignominy and death; he uttered no complaint, though treated violently and unjustly. He was submissive, like the innocent lamb.

33. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away.* The corresponding verse, in the Old Testament, reads thus: "He was taken away from prison and from judgment;" that is, as some able critics explain the prophet's language, He was taken away to death by a violent judicial procedure. The language here adopted by Luke from the ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, is variously explained. The most obvious idea seems to be this: In the lowly condition to which he submitted, a righteous judgment was taken away from him, justice was denied him, his rights were withheld. || *And who shall declare his generation?* The idea of extinction seems to be conveyed. In the case of a man cut off prematurely in early life, leaving no posterity, there will be no one to number up, or to recount, his de-

his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

scendants, or a generation proceeding from him. When such a man is cut off, there is — so to speak — an end of him. Who shall declare, or describe, his family? He leaves none behind, who will regard him as their leader. So, when the Lord Jesus was cut off, his enemies, and even his desponding friends, might liken him to such a man. The hopes of his friends that he would have numerous followers were crushed; they seem to have regarded his death as an event fatal to his plans and their expectations. This inquiry, then, Who shall declare his generation? seems to be a question asked according to a human view of the crucifixion of Jesus — a view that would naturally occur to the short-sighted mind of man. The words in immediate connection with the inquiry appear to accord with this explanation. || *For his life is taken from the earth*; he is not permitted to live among men, or, as the Old Testament expresses the idea, “He was cut off out of the land of the living.” When Jesus was crucified, it was natural, in the view of some, to expect that nothing more would be heard of him. For, humanly speaking, when Jesus was condemned and crucified as an impostor and blasphemer, what prospect was there that he would have numerous followers? — A more usual explanation of the verse, and one thought to be more conformed to the expressions in the Hebrew of the prophet Isaiah, may be thus stated: ‘In humiliation and oppression was his judicial sentence. He was violently taken away. Yet who can describe the number of his followers, though he was thus removed from the earth? Those who adopt this view, understand also by *generation*, in reference to the Messiah, the same as is meant by the word *seed* in Is. 53: 10 — “He shall see his seed;” that is, he shall have a

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on *their*

spiritual posterity — in other words, followers. The same idea is conveyed in Ps. 22: 30 — “*A seed shall serve him*;” that is, there shall be disciples, or followers, who shall acknowledge him as their Lord. — Some eminent interpreters explain the question, “Who shall declare his generation?” as meaning, Who can describe the men of his generation? men, so criminal, carrying their wickedness to such a height in cutting him off from the land of the living, — who can fitly describe so guilty a generation?

34. *And the eunuch answered Philip*, &c. The point of difficulty in the Ethiopian's mind was this: To whom did the passage in Isaiah refer? concerning whom was the prophet speaking? The passage had now become invested with an unwonted interest, perhaps through what he had heard in Jerusalem. But whether he began obscurely to connect this passage with what he may have heard concerning Jesus, or not, the Holy Spirit had so directed his mind in regard to it, that he was anxious to obtain information. Hence he at once frankly proposed his inquiries to Philip. This he would feel encouraged to do, by the interest which Philip had manifested in him, and by Philip's having accepted the invitation to teach one who felt himself in need of a spiritual guide. v. 31.

35. *Preached unto him Jesus*. Philip, divinely taught, saw the reference of this scripture to the Messiah. Such was the current application of it among the early Jews; although, in subsequent times, to be free from so strong an argument for Christianity, Jewish rabbins have endeavored to invalidate its application to the Messiah. Taking the passage quoted from Isaiah, and, without doubt, the connected verses, Philip showed that the prophet's language had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The chief events in the life of Jesus, and par-

way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and

ticularly the manner of his death, and then his resurrection, and the attestations to his being the Messiah, which God had given on the day of Pentecost, and on other occasions, we may believe, were related. A sufficiently full account to produce an enlightened conviction, and to show what Jesus required of those who should become his disciples, must have been given, as appears from what follows in the inspired narrative. The word preached, as here used, conveys merely the idea of making known the gospel: this may be done in private conversation as really as in a public discourse.

36. *They came unto a certain water*; or, as we familiarly say, *they came to some water*. Dr. Bloomfield, of the English Episcopal church, expresses, in his Notes to the Greek Testament, the opinion that this water was "probably some fountain or pool, formed by a brook either running into the Eshcol rivulet, or formed at a bend of the Eshcol itself." Dr. Doddridge also expresses his belief that there was "in that place some pool or stream adjoining to the road." || *What doth hinder me to be baptized?* The fact that such an inquiry was proposed, shows that Philip had instructed the Ethiopian in the duty of baptism, on the part of those who should receive Jesus as the Messiah. As a teacher of the doctrines of Jesus, he would of course make known the appointed method of avowing subjection to him. Thus did the apostles on the day of Pentecost. 2: 38. The Ethiopian officer, perceiving the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies in Jesus, was led to yield up himself to him as the Saviour and Lord. And having an opportunity to be baptized, in accordance with the Saviour's will, he expressed his desire at once

said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

to render obedience; for the spirit of Christian obedience is prompt, as well as sincere and affectionate.

37. *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* This belief was more than a conviction of the understanding that Jesus was the Messiah, or Saviour, and that his religion was the only true religion. It was such a conviction, accompanied with a corresponding trust in Jesus, and a spirit of obedience to him. True faith, or belief, in Jesus, is such as makes a person his disciple. It consists much more in a spirit of affectionate reliance on him as the great teacher and Saviour, and of obedience to him as our rightful Lord, than in an intellectual conviction of the truth of the gospel.

38. *And he commanded the chariot, &c.* The Ethiopian nobleman ordered the chariot to be stopped. || *They went down both into the water.* The words employed here, in the original, are those which would naturally occur in conveying the idea that the two persons went down some distance into the water. If Luke had meant to express the idea that the persons went merely to the water, he would naturally have employed a different preposition. The copious Greek language is not deficient as to a word which would precisely convey this idea. A reader of Greek may see the difference, as to form of expression, between "going down *into* a body of water" and "going down *to* a body of water," by comparing this passage with John 6:16. It is very generally agreed, among writers of authority, that, in the apostles' times, baptism was administered after the person had gone into some river or brook, or water of some considerable depth. || *And he baptized him.* When they

39 And when they were come, up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that

had arrived at a proper depth of water, Philip baptized him. The original and proper meaning of the word *baptize* readily occurs to a reader of this passage. The Greek word, here used, is the active form of that which is used in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, in 2 Kings 5:14, where we read of Naaman the Syrian, "Then went he down and *dipped* himself seven times in Jordan." And no sufficient reason can be given why the parties went down *into* the water, but for the sake of an immersion of the new convert. Accordingly, Dr. Doddridge, in his exposition of this verse, says, "It would be very unnatural to suppose that they went down to [into, as a strict accordance with the Greek requires] the water, merely that Philip might take up a little water in his hand to pour on the eunuch."

This very simple and intelligible passage has been sometimes, to the view of an inquirer, encumbered by the remark, that we cannot decide by it, whether Philip baptized the eunuch, or the eunuch baptized Philip, because it is said they *both went down* into the water. A word or two may remove the misapprehension involved in such a remark. The going down into the water was not the baptism: baptism was performed, as the account states, after they had gone into the water, that is, to a suitable depth. The Ethiopian had requested baptism, and Philip was an evangelist. There is no real cause for perplexity in the case.

39. *When they were come up out of the water.* The Greek preposition here translated *out of*, is, according to the acknowledgment of the ablest Greek scholars, the one which would naturally occur to a writer who meant to express a movement *out of* the water. || *The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.* Some writers, both ancient and modern, have ex-

pressed the opinion that Philip was miraculously conveyed through the air. That there was something supernatural in the manner of Philip's being separated from the Ethiopian, would seem to be favored by the language used respecting the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 18:12, — "The Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not," — where the connection implies a supernatural removing of the prophet from place to place. Compare, also, 2 Kings 2:16, where the thought of a miraculous movement is conveyed by the words, "Lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley." It is one of those cases, however, the details of which we may never be able to decide. It is believed, by others, that the Spirit gave the mind of Philip a sudden and irresistible conviction of his duty to hurry away at once in another direction. In the latter case, the term *caught away*, which seems to express some external acting on the person of Philip, may be compared with the language in Mark 1:12, where the Spirit is said to have *driven* Jesus into the wilderness, and where the sacred writer, as we have reason to believe, employed only a strong method of asserting the Spirit's influence on the mind of Jesus, inducing him to go to the wilderness. So Philip may have felt, on a sudden, an irresistible impulse of the Spirit instantly to leave this new convert. It would, doubtless, have been a pleasure to him, still longer to have enjoyed his company, and to have imparted to him a fuller knowledge of the gospel. But the Spirit of God may be said to have torn him from such a purpose, and made him abruptly depart with all speed, another way. || *And he went on his way rejoicing;* more literally, *for he went on his way.* The words express one of the reasons why the eunuch saw Philip

40 But Philip was found at Azotus : and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

no more. Duty required him to prosecute his homeward journey to Ethiopia, and he therefore went on his way, while Philip hurried off, or was hurried off, in an opposite direction.—Well might the Ethiopian pursue his journey with unwonted joy. He had obtained a satisfactory addition to his religious knowledge ; he was cherishing a pious submission to God ; true peace, also, had taken up its abode in his conscience ; and a new hope had begun to animate his breast. Compare Ps. 119 : 165. 1 Pet. 1 : 8. 3 : 21. The joy with which the Ethiopian convert pursued his journey reminds us of the happiness which the converts on the day of Pentecost possessed. They had much “gladness and singleness of heart,” and were habitually praising God. Acts 2 : 46, 47. He, doubtless, contemplated with joy, too, the prospect of making known the Saviour in the country of his residence. It is an interesting statement, which Eusebius, the early ecclesiastical historian, makes in his History (II. 1), that this convert is said to have successfully introduced the gospel into Ethiopia.

40. *Philip was found at Azotus ;* the city called *Ashdod* in the Old Testament. 1 Sam. 6 : 17. It lay north from Gaza about thirty miles. || *Cesarea.* This was a distinguished city in Palestine, on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, not far, in a southerly direction, from mount Carmel. It was about sixty miles north-west from Jerusalem. It was anciently named *Strato's Tower*. Herod the Great bestowed on the city much labor and expense in repairing and adorning it, and in constructing a harbor for it. He named it *Cesarea*, in honor of the Roman emperor Augustus Cesar. It was one of the largest cities in Palestine, and was inhabited mostly by Greeks, though the number of Jews and Samaritans

CHAPTER IX.

1 Saul, going towards Damascus, 4 is stricken down to the earth, 10 is called to the apostleship, 18 and is baptized by An-

was also very considerable. It was the chief residence of the Roman governor, and after the destruction of Jerusalem became the capital of Palestine. It is at present only a heap of ruins. A map of Palestine will show that, between Azotus, or Ashdod, and Cesarea, there were many considerable towns, in which Philip would have an opportunity to preach the gospel.

HINTS suggested by the account of the Ethiopian nobleman.—1. We have sometimes cheering proofs, that dignity and station are not incompatible with devout exercises, or with a cordial reception of the gospel, and observance of its ordinances. vs. 27, 38. So Daniel, though filling the first station in the court of king Darius (Dan. 6 : 2), was equally remarkable for maintaining habits of piety, and for fidelity in his office. Dan. 6 : 10, 11.

2. A careful attention to the Scriptures often issues in true piety. vs. 28, 37. So the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily ; and therefore many of them became believers in Jesus. Acts 17 : 11, 12.

3. How important, that we understand the Scriptures ! and that we have pious and intelligent ministers, and other judicious friends, who may guide us in the way of religious truth. vs. 30, 31.

CHAPTER IX.

The writer of the Acts had previously mentioned Saul, as participating in the martyrdom of Stephen (7 : 58), and as taking a very active part in the persecution of the Christians which followed that event. 8 : 3. He now returns to the same individual, and relates his miraculous conversion, and his entering with zeal upon the public defence and the extension of the gospel.

nias. 20 He preacheth Christ boldly. 23 The Jews lay wait to kill him: 29 so do the Grecians, but he escapeth both. 31 The church having rest, Peter healeth Eneas of the palsy, 36 and restoreth Tabitha to life.

AND Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,

1. *Breathing out threatening and slaughter*; a very emphatic expression, showing that Saul was full of rage against the followers of Jesus, and was conceiving cruel and murderous designs respecting them. || *Went unto the high priest*. The high priest was president of the sanhedrim; and therefore, from his official station as well as his personal feelings, would be likely to encourage hostility against the Christians. He could furnish the requisite authority to those who sought it, to arraign them before the Jewish court. Saul, consequently, applied to him for such authority, and was thus virtually acting in the name of the chief Jewish court. See v. 14. Compare 22: 5.

2. *Desired of him letters to Damascus*. The letters which he sought were credentials of his authority to act in the name of the sanhedrim. He proposed to go to Damascus, a populous city of Syria, not far from the confines of the Jewish territory on the north-east. It was a resort for vast multitudes of Jews, as appears from the fact stated by Josephus in his Jewish War (2.20.2.), that ten thousand Jews in this city were, in the reign of the emperor Nero, put to death on one occasion. It might naturally be expected, that many who had heard the gospel in Palestine would convey it to Damascus, and that many of the Jews in that city had become disciples of Jesus. Besides, many Christians had, doubtless, fled thither, when the persecution raged so severely in Jerusalem, after the death of Stephen. Compare 8: 1, 4. || *To the synagogues*. Many synagogues would be needed in Damascus, to accommodate the Jews in their worship; for wherever any considerable number of Jews were settled,

went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came

they provided themselves with a building for that purpose. Each synagogue had its proper officers, who constituted the eldership. They managed the affairs of the synagogue, and had a sort of authority over those who were considered as belonging to it. The letters which Saul received were directed, of course, to the elders of the synagogues. These men had a general acquaintance with all the Jews in the city, and knew who had become avowed Christians, and who were suspected of a leaning towards the cause of Jesus. || *Any of this way*; any Christians, any who were following the way of Jesus and his apostles. || *Whether they were men or women*. None were to be spared, so unrelenting was the spirit of persecution which had taken possession of Saul's breast. Compare 8: 3. || *He might bring them bound unto Jerusalem*. Jerusalem was the chief seat of the Jewish authority, as being the metropolis of the country; and high offences against the Jewish religion, committed by Jews, were tried before the sanhedrim in that city. To the Jews scattered over the world Jerusalem was a central point, as to religious jurisdiction. The synagogues every where acknowledged an accountability to the sanhedrim; and the civil authorities in foreign cities did not interfere with this accountability on the part of the Jewish inhabitants, in regard to religious matters. Hence a commission from Jerusalem to search out apostate Jews in foreign cities, and bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment on religious grounds, could be carried into effect without hinderance from the civil authorities, or without protection being extended, by the magistrates in those cities, to suspected and oppressed

near Damascus : and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven :

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. *It*

Jews. This was, in all probability, eminently the case in Damascus at the time here spoken of; for Aretas, an Arabian king, who then had control over the city (2 Cor. 11 : 32), was either, according to some writers, a Jewish proselyte, or at least was greatly in favor of the Jews. Compare this verse with 22 : 5.

3. *There shined round about him a light from heaven.* The time of day when this took place was "about noon" (22 : 6), or "midday." 26 : 13. In 22 : 6, the light is said to have been "a great light;" and in 26 : 13, "a light above the brightness of the sun."

4. *Heard a voice saying unto him, &c.* The voice addressed him, according to 26 : 14, "in the Hebrew tongue;" that is, in that dialect of Hebrew which was then spoken in Palestine. The mention of such particulars shows that what is related was really an external occurrence, and not merely something passing in Saul's mind.

5. *And he said, Who art thou, Lord ?* An impression was at once made on Saul's mind, that a divine communication was sent to him. || *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* By persecuting the disciples of Jesus and opposing his cause, Saul was in reality persecuting Jesus. And so far as he knew Jesus, he indulged none but feelings of enmity against him. || *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;* that is, against sharp goads. This was a proverbial expression, and it here intimates, not only the utter futility of Saul's opposition to Jesus, but also the inevitable injury which he would bring on himself by persisting in such attempts. This proverb-

is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling, and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hear-

bial saying was derived from the custom of using a goad in driving oxen or horses. It is useless for the ox to kick against the goad, in his anger at being pierced by it; his rebellious spirit only causes him more trouble. Thus Saul was warned to set himself no longer in opposition to Jesus; he would find it wholly ineffectual; his opposition would surely recoil on himself.

6. *Arise and go into the city.* Compare 22 : 10.

7. *And the men — stood speechless.* They were struck dumb with amazement. In 26 : 14, Paul says, respecting the whole company, "We were all fallen to the earth." Some might hence imagine that the historian Luke makes a different representation from that of the apostle who was personally concerned. It is only necessary, however, to observe that, while all were struck to the ground with amazement, and Saul, being so much more deeply affected, and being personally and solely interested in the communication from Jesus, still remained prostrate, the others had somewhat recovered themselves, and arisen. Or, we may suppose that Saul's attendants were not at once struck to the ground, but, at first, stood in mute astonishment, and afterwards, through the awe which had penetrated their souls, they fell to the ground. || *Hearing a voice.* In 22 : 9, it is said, "They that were with me heard not the voice of him that spake to me." Both the statements are true. Saul's companions heard a voice, but did not hear so as to understand what was said; they heard indistinctly. The word *hear* is fre-

ing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

quently employed by ancient writers as equivalent to *understand*. Nor is it at all surprising that Saul's companions did not hear distinctly. The message which the voice conveyed, was *to him*, not to them. His state of mind, too, was such as to prepare him for such a message; theirs was not. Besides, there is no need of supposing that the voice was above a low tone. || *Seeing no man*. Their eyes were dazzled by the excessive splendor which suddenly burst on them. Compare 26: 13, 14. The effect produced on the sight by a sharp flash of lightning, may illustrate, to some extent, the effect on Saul's company of this sudden and supernatural splendor, which was more excessive than that of the sun at noon.

8. *He saw no man*. He had become really blind. He was not only dazzled by the splendor which had so suddenly burst on him, but, besides the natural effect of that splendor, he was actually deprived of sight. See v. 18, where the restoration of his sight is spoken of as supernatural. His companions, however, were not thus made blind, for they led him into the city (22: 11) — a circumstance which well agrees with the belief, that Saul's blindness was a special miraculous judgment on him from heaven. || *Brought him into Damascus*. He had been directed by the Lord (v. 6) to go into the city, with the expectation of being there instructed as to his duty. See 22: 11.

9. *He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink*. Such was his mental state, — so conscious of guilt in the sight of God, so ignorant of the way of deliverance from the stings of an accusing con-

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called

science, — that he might well have lost all desire for food. His bodily powers, also, were considerably affected by the scene he had passed through. In such terror and remorse as he was, his mind so occupied with thoughts that were entirely new to him, and that were of so absorbing a nature, his fasting was a perfectly natural result. It is not necessary to suppose that *three entire days* are here meant. According to the Jewish mode of speaking, they may have been *parts* of two days, with one intervening whole day. Thus, in respect to our Lord, it was said (Matt. 12: 40), that he should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; and yet, in Matt. 16: 21, that he should rise *on the third day*. He was in the sepulchre during parts of two days, and the whole of the intervening day; and this space of time fully answered, among the Jews, the expression *three days and three nights*. So, in regard to Saul, the day on which he was led into Damascus, and the day on which Ananias conversed with him (v. 17), may have been two of the three.

10. *Said the Lord*; the Lord Jesus. See v. 17. || *In a vision*; by a supernatural appearance. But whether presented to the bodily eyes of Ananias, or in some other way, cannot be determined, since Saul, while in a state of blindness, is also said to have seen a person in a vision. v. 12.

11. *Called Saul of Tarsus*; Saul by name, a man of Tarsus. Tarsus was the chief city of the province Cilicia, in Asia Minor. It was very celebrated, eminent for cultivating the Greek philosophy and literature. "As a seat of literature, it was ranked

Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of

by the side of Athens and Alexandria." By a distinguished writer of antiquity, it is even placed before those cities. Tarsus was made a free city by the emperor Augustus. The citizens thus enjoyed the privilege of freedom from tribute, and of being governed by laws and magistrates of their own choice. || *Behold, he prayeth.* By this expression, his change of character was made known to Ananias. It was an amazing change, indeed. He who had been persecuting, even unto death, the disciples of the Lord Jesus, is now calling on that very Lord for mercy. He is no longer the persecutor; he is now an humbled suppliant, a praying man.

12. *Putting his hand on him;* a frequent act among the Jews, connected with imploring from God, or with bestowing, a blessing. See 8: 17.

The special providence of God, and his intimate access to men's souls, cannot but be here noticed. An impression was divinely communicated to Saul's mind respecting Ananias' visit to him; and a corresponding impression was, at the proper time, made on Ananias' mind, leading him to make the visit to Saul, and to bestow on him the needed blessing.

13. *To thy saints.* The word *saints*, by the corresponding term to which, in the Hebrew language, the Jews had been designated, as being *separated* from other nations, to be God's people (Ex. 19: 6. Deut. 7: 6), acknowledging and worshipping him, began now to be applied in a more eminent and spiritual sense to the followers of Christ, as holy persons, consecrated to the Lord by

this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name be-

their self-dedication and profession of obedience to him, and by their thus being a peculiar people, separate from the world. Compare 1 Pet. 2: 9.

14. *And here he hath authority, &c.* The purpose for which Saul was going to Damascus, had become known. Perhaps tidings had been sent by the Christians in Jerusalem to their brethren in Damascus; perhaps publicity had been given to the purpose by the enemies of the Christians. The knowledge of the object for which Saul had left Jerusalem, would naturally make Ananias demur, and wish for increased assurance that it would be safe for him to visit Saul. The thought might even have occurred to him that Saul was acting a borrowed part in professing to have become a changed man, so as more effectually in the end to delude and destroy the Christians.

15. *For he is a chosen vessel unto me, &c.*; I have selected him to become a distinguished instrument, in my hands, of extending far and wide a knowledge of me and of my gospel. Hence the apostle speaks of himself to the Galatians (Gal. 1: 15), as having been divinely set apart and called to the work of preaching the gospel. || *Before the Gentiles;* the nations in general, as distinguished from the Jews. || *Kings.* Rulers of high authority, whether sovereigns, or governors of provinces, are meant by this word. In his subsequent life, facts accorded with this disclosure of the divine purpose respecting Saul. He made known the doctrine of Christ, before Felix (24: 10—21), Festus, and Agrippa (26: 2—29), rulers of high rank, though dependent on the Roman emperor. Roman em-

fore the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house: and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus

perors, too, heard of Christ by his means. || *The children of Israel*; the Jews. Before Jews and Gentiles, before the great men of the earth, as well as the obscure, he was to proclaim the doctrine of Christ. Compare 22:15.

16. *For I will show him how great things he must suffer, &c.* This declaration was made, probably, to satisfy Ananias that Saul was a sincere penitent, and might be relied on as one who would voluntarily encounter great sufferings for the Saviour's sake. The Lord knew his sincerity, and was purposing to disclose to him fully, beforehand, the dangers to which he was to expose himself in defence of the gospel. For he was to become a distinguished servant of Jesus, and, as such, was to endure great sufferings. It was also in full view of sufferings for Christ's sake, that he would enter on the work of spreading abroad the gospel. It was to him, whose sincere attachment to Jesus was thus to be manifested, that Ananias was directed to go. He might, therefore, dismiss his fears, and go cheerfully to the man whose name had filled the Christians with dread, and with confidence bear to him the message of mercy. Such a communication from the Lord himself removed the doubts and fears of Ananias, so that he promptly entered on the service to which he had been called.

17. *Putting his hands on him.* See on v. 12. The twofold purpose appears to have been connected with this act, of restoring sight to Saul and of bestowing on him the gifts of the Holy Spirit. || *Brother Saul.* He was a brother by nation, being a

that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received

Jew; and, in view of the communication which the Lord had made to Ananias, the term *brother*, in a Christian sense, would be felt by him a suitable one to be applied to Saul. || *That appeared unto thee in the way, &c.* See v. 3, &c. || *Filled with the Holy Ghost*; plentifully endued with spiritual gifts.

18. *Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales.* As soon as Ananias had placed his hands on Saul, and announced the purpose for which Jesus had sent him, the scaly, or crust-like substance, which had been caused to grow over Saul's eyes, fell off. No natural means produced this effect. It was evidently the result of special divine interposition. That this restoration of sight is to be regarded as miraculous, is further evident from the fact, that Ananias was divinely sent to Saul for the very purpose of restoring to him his sight (v. 17), and that, in 22:13, the apostle connects the event with the simple declaration to him of Ananias — “*Brother Saul, receive thy sight.*” Whether the substance, which had gathered over his eyes in so solid a manner as to be compared to scales, was formed from the natural humors of the eyes, or not, is immaterial. The sudden removal of the obstruction at the word of Ananias, and the fact that Ananias was sent to him for that very purpose, as well as for other purposes, clearly show the hand of God operating miraculously. || *And was baptized.* He at once, in the divinely appointed manner, professed his faith in Jesus, whom he had, till the third day before, so bitterly persecuted. Having publicly entered on the path of Christian obedience,

meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and

came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.

he ever after proved himself to be a chosen instrument for vindicating and extending the cause of his Lord. Well may we say, "This was the Lord's doing." Ps. 118: 23. Well might the churches in Judea, when 'they heard that he who persecuted them in times past was preaching the faith which once he destroyed, glorify God in him.' Gal. 1: 22—24.

20. *He preached Christ in the synagogues.* He publicly maintained the claims of Jesus Christ, in the Jewish places of worship. His first aim was, to do good to his countrymen, his "kinsmen according to the flesh." See Rom. 9: 1—3. 10: 1. As he was a Jew, he could, according to Jewish customs, have access to the synagogues, and enjoy the privilege of addressing the assemblies during their worship. || *That he is the Son of God*; the Messiah. The expression *Son of God* is here used, as in John 11: 27, to denote the Messiah, as an official title. The point at which Saul now earnestly labored, was to convince the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was really the promised Messiah.

21. *Which called on this name*; who called on the name of Jesus as their Lord; that is, the Christians.

22. *Increased the more in strength*; became stronger in Christian faith and determination. || *Confounded the Jews*; confuted them in argument. || *Proving that this is very Christ*; that this person, Jesus, is the very Messiah. The word *Christ* is here evidently a term of office.

The account which the sacred historian here gives us respecting Saul is very brief, and omits some partic-

ulars, for a knowledge of which we are indebted to the apostle himself. He tells us, in his Epistle to the Galatians (1: 17, 18), that, after his conversion, he visited Arabia, and returned to Damascus before going back to Jerusalem. Perhaps what the historian has thus far related, occurred before Saul left Damascus for Arabia, as it is said, in the 20th verse, that he *straightway*, immediately, began to preach Christ in the synagogues. The events which are related from the 23d verse, occurred, perhaps (for nothing positive can here be said), after Saul's return to Damascus from Arabia. Such omissions of particular events, when the relation of them is not required by the writer's purpose, are not unusual in the Scriptures, or, it may be added, in other books, or in conversation. A similar passing over of an event occurs in Luke's history of the first years in the life of Jesus. He makes no mention of the removal of Joseph and Mary, with the young child, to Egypt; but without giving any notice of that event, passes from the presentation of Jesus in the temple to the residence in Nazareth. See Luke 2: 39. Matthew (2: 13—15) supplies this vacancy in the early history of Jesus. So the apostle himself supplies a vacancy in Luke's account of events which occurred soon after his conversion; Luke's purpose in writing being such, as did not require him to descend to so much particularity.

23. *After that many days were fulfilled.* The *many days*, here mentioned, may have been reckoned by the writer from the date of Saul's

24 But their laying wait was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

conversion, and may therefore include the time which, as we learn from Gal. 1:17, he spent in Arabia. This space was, at least, three years. See Gal. 1:18.

24. *But their laying wait was known of Saul.* It would seem, not only that the fact of their plotting for his life was known to him, but also that he had obtained information of the plot itself. || *They watched the gates day and night, &c.* In expectation that he would seek to escape through one of the city gates, a guard was set there to seize him. From 2 Cor. 11:32, we learn that Aretas, the Arabian king, who at that time had possession of Damascus, favored this attempt at apprehending Saul. He authorized the governor of the city to employ some of the military force for this purpose. He was, perhaps, instigated to this by the Jews; and, as he was greatly in favor of the Jews, if not himself a Jewish proselyte (see on v. 2), they found in him a willing adversary of so zealous a Christian as Saul was.

25. *Let him down by the wall, &c.* From 2 Cor. 11:33, we learn, more particularly, that Saul was let down *through a window*. There may have been some aperture in the city wall, through which he could be passed; or, access may have been found to one of the towers on the wall, in which was a window. Or, as was sometimes the case in walled cities, there was a house so adjoining to the city wall, or connected with it, that advantage could be taken of one of its windows for the purpose here mentioned. The case was, perhaps, somewhat similar to that of the spies sent by Joshua to Jericho, who were protected by Rahab, and were let down by a cord, or rope, through the window; the house being "upon the town wall." See Josh. 2:15.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and

26. *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem.* This was at least three years after his conversion. Compare Gal. 1:16—18. || *He assayed to join himself to the disciples.* He attempted to associate with the Christians, as a follower of Jesus. || *They were all afraid of him, and believed not, &c.* They remembered him as their virulent persecutor; and, as he had declined so long coming to Jerusalem, which was then the chief seat of Christian influence, and as he had, perhaps, scarcely been heard of there for three years, they suspected his sincerity. It would seem, too, from the next verse, that they had not received a particular account of his conversion, and of his activity in the cause of Jesus. It is wholly probable that the three years which had elapsed since Saul's conversion, were not spent in Damascus; for, had he spent the most of that time in a city so distinguished, and not very remote from Judea, information respecting him would have found its way to Jerusalem. May he not have spent the most of the time in Arabia? Then, having returned to Damascus with increased zeal and power as an advocate for the Christian cause, persecution speedily arose, and he escaped from the city.

27. *Barnabas took him, &c.*; a very suitable man to interpose on such an occasion, and to give assurance concerning the changed character of Saul to the suspecting Christians. He was, as is evident from Acts 4:36, 37, a man of great generosity and self-denial, and of unquestionable attachment to the cause of Jesus; an eminently good man, full of the Holy Ghost and faith. 11:24. He had become acquainted with all the particulars in regard to Saul's conversion and efforts in Damascus, and now introduced him favorably to

brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

the brethren in Jerusalem. A strong attachment grew up between Barnabas and Saul. They were companions during the apostle's first tour in Asia Minor for the purpose of spreading the gospel. See 11: 25, 26, 30. 12: 25. 13: 2, 50. 14th chapter. || *Brought him to the apostles.* From Gal. 1: 18, 19, we learn that Saul did not become acquainted with *all* the apostles during his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion—a visit of only fifteen days' continuance. He became acquainted only with Peter and James. The other apostles were doubtless absent from the city at that time.

28. *Coming in and going out*; visiting familiarly among the brethren, being on intimate terms with them.

29. *Grecians.* The word *Grecians*, here, as in 6: 1, does not mean Gentile Greeks, but Jews who, having lived among Greeks, had so far conformed to them as to use the Greek language. Jews who lived in foreign cities would almost necessarily adopt, in ordinary intercourse, the language which prevailed in those cities; and that was the Greek. Some such Jews would, through various causes, remove, for permanent residence, to Judea, and still speak Greek; many more would be temporarily sojourning in Jerusalem; and perhaps some, who had always resided in Palestine, preferred to use the Greek language, as the ordinary civil business was conducted in that language. Saul, being a native of Tarsus, a Greek city, used the Greek language fluently, and was able, therefore, to maintain conversation, and to argue with these Hellenists, or Grecian Jews. || *They went about to slay him*; en-

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30 *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest

deavored to slay him. He was the object of hatred and of murderous designs on the part of the Jews in Jerusalem, as in Damascus. See v. 23.

30. *Cesarea*; a seaport on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, not far from mount Carmel, about sixty miles from Jerusalem. See on 8: 40. At Cesarea, Saul would be able to obtain a passage in some vessel sailing for Tarsus, or for some of the ports between Cesarea and Tarsus. || *Tarsus*; Saul's native city. See v. 11. 21: 39. In sending Saul away from Jerusalem, the disciples not only consulted for his safety, but complied with the Saviour's direction in Matt. 10: 23—"When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Still further, it would appear, from Acts 22: 18—21, that a special revelation had been made to him of the Lord's will that he should leave Jerusalem.

31. *Then had the churches rest.* Their most zealous persecutor, Saul, had himself become a follower of Jesus; and their other adversaries had, probably, become convinced of the utter futility of persecution, and saw the prudence of letting them alone, according to the counsel of Gamaliel. Acts 5: 38, 39. Perhaps, too, some circumstances in the condition of the Jews about this time, withdrew the attention of the chief men from the Christians. Dr. Doddridge mentions an observation of Lardner, "that this repose of the Christians might be occasioned by the general alarm which was given to the Jews [about the year of our Lord 40], when Petronius, by the order of Caligula (incensed by some

throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified: and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*,

affront said to have been offered him by the Alexandrian Jews), attempted to bring the statue of that emperor among them, and to set it up in the holy of holies — a most horrid profanation, which the whole people deprecated with the greatest concern.”

|| *Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria*;

the three divisions of Palestine in the time of the apostles; Judea being the southern portion, Galilee the northern, and Samaria the central.

|| *Were edified*; were built up, advanced in knowledge and piety.

|| *Walking in the fear of the Lord*; living in true piety. || *Comfort of the Holy Ghost*; comfort and aid which the Holy Spirit imparted.

|| *Were multiplied*. The churches already formed in Palestine were enlarged by the accession of converts, and new churches were formed. The number of believers continued to increase. — Thus the cause of Christ is destined to prosper and increase, and to prevail every where. Opposition will pass away. The most violent persecutor may be changed into the most zealous and laborious friend. And let us not fail to notice, that true Christian prosperity results from true piety. God may also allow the persecutors of his cause to be themselves treated with contempt and violence by those who have power over them; thus withdrawing them from their purpose to injure his cause, and even inspiring in their breasts sentiments of sympathy and regard for those, on whom they were designing to trample. It is interesting, too,

to perceive that, though persecution drove away from their homes and circles of influence many devoted Christians, and thus apparently weakened the Christian cause, yet God soon raised up an increased number to supply their places. The knowl-

he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him,

edge of Christ was thus spread abroad in remote regions, by those who were driven from their Christian privileges; and yet the cause of Jesus was not permitted to languish at home by their absence. Persecution is overruled to the furtherance of the gospel. Compare Phil. 1: 12.

32. The sacred historian now introduces, from this verse to the 18th of the eleventh chapter, a brief account of the apostle Peter's labors beyond the limits of Jerusalem. With the exception of a short excursion to the city of Samaria, as related in 8: 14 — 25, Peter appears to have been thus far occupied with labors in Jerusalem. His presence in the city was important, in those times of persecution, and of laying the foundations of the Christian cause. Now, however, as comparative tranquillity was enjoyed by the church, he could, without hazard to the Christian interest in Jerusalem, go abroad. His visits to the newly-formed churches would be highly profitable to them in confirming their faith, in extending their knowledge of the gospel, and in encouraging and directing their activity. He would, also, have opportunities for preaching among unconverted Jews. *He came down to the saints*; to the Christians. See on v. 13. || *Lydda*; a large town in Judea, lying a short distance east from Joppa, and about a day's journey distant from Jerusalem. It is believed to be the same as was anciently called *Lod*. See 1 Chron. 8: 12. Ezra 2: 33. Neh. 7: 37.

33. *Eneas*. As this is a Greek name, the man was probably a Jew who had been living in the vicinity of Greeks, and was in the habit of speaking the Greek language, like the Grecian Jews mentioned in v. 29. || *Which had kept his bed eight*

Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha,

years. Such was his bodily infirmity, that, for eight *years*, he had been, as we say, *bed-ridden*—almost wholly confined to his bed. || *Sick of the palsy*; a paralytic. See on 8: 7.

34. *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole*; literally, *Jesus the Messiah healeth thee*. Peter was careful that no mistake should be made as to the real author of the miraculous cure. It was not performed by his own power, or holiness (3: 12), but by Jesus, who, by this miracle, as well as the other works performed by him, and in his name, was proved to be the long-expected Messiah. Peter was only the instrument (as Calvin says), while the power was Christ's. Thus Peter sought to secure the glory to Christ alone. || *Make thy bed*. The idea conveyed was, that this man, who had been so long dependent on others for preparing his bed, would now have strength enough to do it himself. The form of expression was naturally suggested by the peculiar circumstances of the man, and was designed to assure him of immediate restoration to health.

35. *Saron*; or *Sharon*, as the word is spelled in the Old Testament. See 1 Chron. 27: 29. Is. 33: 9. 35: 2. 65: 10. It was a large, fertile plain, extending from the neighborhood of Joppa to mount Carmel, and much celebrated for its rich fields and pastures. There were many villages in this tract of country. || *Turned to the Lord*. The knowledge of this miracle, being spread through the region, was followed by a general reception of the gospel.

36. *Joppa*. This was a noted seaport on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, about forty-five miles north-west from Jerusalem. It was the nearest seaport to Jerusalem, and

which by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

was, therefore, the port by means of which that metropolis carried on its maritime intercourse with other cities and countries. It was to Joppa, that the timber from mount Lebanon was conveyed in rafts, in the days of Solomon, for building his palace and the temple in Jerusalem. 2 Chron. 2: 16. In the time of Ezra, too, timber was sent to the same port for rebuilding the temple. Ezra 3: 7. This was the city, also, from which the prophet Jonah sailed when he sought to escape from the presence of the Lord. Jonah 1: 3. It was one of the most ancient ports in the world, and is the city called *Japho* in Josh. 19: 46. It experienced great and frequent vicissitudes of condition. As being a distinguished seaport, it was of much importance during the crusades. It now bears the name *Jaffa*, and is an inconsiderable town, though it is said to have four or five thousand inhabitants, of whom the greater part are Turks and Arabs. || *Tabitha*, which by interpretation is called *Dorcas*. The name *Tabitha*, in the language generally spoken among the Jews in Palestine, answered in meaning to the Greek word *Dorcas*. They both originally meant the *gazelle*—a very beautiful species of the goat. The names of animals which were remarkable for their beauty or their innocent and attractive qualities, were often used anciently either as names for children, or as terms of endearment. || *Full of good works and alms-deeds*. She had become distinguished by her deeds of piety and benevolence.

37. *An upper chamber*; an apartment either on, or connected with, the roof of houses among the Hebrews, the roof being nearly flat. It

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose, and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth,

was a room not in common use, but appropriated to the reception of friends, to private prayer and meditation. See on 1: 13.

38. *Lydda was nigh to Joppa*; a little to the east of Joppa. || *Peter was there*. See v. 32. || *Desiring him that he would not delay, &c.* They doubtless cherished the hope of her being restored to life by Peter's means.

39. *All the widows, &c.*; those widows, probably, who had been indebted to Tabitha's benevolent activity. By showing garments which she had been in the habit of making for charitable purposes, they bore an affecting testimony to her worth and to their loss; and thus appealed to the sympathies of Peter. — How certainly do those persons secure our esteem, and how eminently worthy are they of our imitation, who "do good, are rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate"! 1 Tim. 6: 18. "The good works" of such are often "manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid" (1 Tim. 5: 25); for their Father who seeth in secret, himself will reward them openly. See Matt. 6: 4. Compare Heb. 13: 16.

40. *Peter put them all forth*. He would thus be free from interruption; and could, when alone, be more earnest and full in his prayer. He wished, too, to avoid ostentation. The Saviour, sometimes, when in-

and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa: and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

tending to restore a dead person to life, wished the intimate friends of the deceased to withdraw. See Matt. 9: 25. The prophet Elisha, when about to restore the deceased child of the Shunamite, went *alone* into the room where the corpse was. 2 Kings 4: 33.

42. *Many believed in the Lord*. They were convinced, by Peter's possession of miraculous power, that Jesus, in whose name he acted, was really the Messiah; and they became disciples.

43. *He tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner*; that is, in the house of one Simon. The employment of Simon was one, which Jews, habitually thinking of ceremonial cleanliness and uncleanness, generally avoided. Some of them, however, as in the present instance, engaged in it. That Peter made his abode with this individual, whom some of his countrymen would have disesteemed on account of his employment, is regarded by some writers as evidence that, though distinguished as an apostle, and having recently performed a signal miracle, he was superior to the prejudice which attaches contempt to certain trades. He, however, thought little of worldly dignity in connection with his being an apostle. He had been taught, by his Master's instructions and example, that true greatness is best adorned by condescension; that he who would be truly great among

CHAPTER X.

1 Cornelius, a devout man, 5 being commanded by an angel, sendeth for Peter: 11 who by a vision 15, 20 is taught not to despise the Gentiles. 34 As he preacheth Christ to Cornelius and his company, 44 the Holy Ghost falleth on them, 48 and they are baptized.

the disciples of Christ, must be least of all and servant of all. Matt. 18: 4. Mark 9: 35. And, indeed, the sphere in society to which Peter had been accustomed was that of ordinary, though very respectable, men; and he, doubtless, would not think of any special difference, as to the common usages of life, between himself and Simon of Joppa.

CHAPTER X.

We have now arrived at a remarkable era in the progress of the gospel. Hitherto, efforts for the conversion of men to Christianity had been confined to Jews, or to those who, though not Jews by birth, had become proselytes to the Jewish religion. The disciples of Christ had not yet fully entered into the spirit of the gospel, so far as concerns its extension to all nations; they still adhered to Jewish opinions in respect to ceremonial cleanliness and the impropriety of associating with people of other religions. They believed, indeed, as the terms of their Lord's last commission to them plainly showed (Matt. 23: 19. Mark 16: 15), that the gospel was to be every where spread, and preached to all men. Still they expected that people of other nations would first become Jews, and adopt Jewish rites, and then, *as being Jews*, would become followers of the Messiah. See 10: 23, 45. 11: 2, 3, 18. 15: 1, 5. The time was now come, however, when it was necessary to correct these views, and to introduce the gospel at once among the Gentiles, without any such preparatory process as the disciples had thought requisite. Peter was the honored instrument of presenting the gospel to the Gentiles, and of introducing Gen-

THERE was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the *Italian band*,

2 *A devout man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.

tiles, *as such*, into the Christian church. Special instruction from heaven was needed in order to dissipate the prejudices against the Gentiles, which his Jewish education had produced, and to prepare him for this distinguished service. The chapter on which we are now entering, relates the method which God employed to enlarge Peter's views, and to prepare him for his visit to a Gentile family. It also records the signal evidence of divine approval, which followed his making known the gospel to those who, without becoming proselytes to the Jewish religion, were found ready to receive the gospel.

1. *Cesarea*; the same city as is mentioned in 8: 40. || *A centurion*; a Roman military officer, who had the command of a hundred men. As *Cesarea* was the principal residence of the Roman governor of Judea, many military officers would of course be there. || *The band called the Italian band*. A band was one of the smaller divisions in Roman armies, corresponding somewhat to our military word *company*. The band, or company, here mentioned, was called *the Italian*, as being composed of men who were natives of Italy. Military companies in the provinces of the Roman empire, and in the service of the empire, were often formed of inhabitants of those provinces, as well as of native Italians. Hence the distinction between an Italian company and a provincial one.

2. *A devout man*, &c. Cornelius was, in reality, a pious man. His reverence towards God, and his other religious feelings and conduct, show this. He had in some way become acquainted, to a considerable extent, with the true God, and conscien-

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to

tiously sought to obey him. He had not yet been taught the gospel, but was in a state of readiness to welcome its plan of salvation, and its system of doctrines and duties. It has been debated, whether or not he had become a proselyte to the Jewish religion. But the language of Peter in v. 28 is inconsistent with the opinion that Cornelius was a proselyte; and the vision which appeared to Peter, was such as would prepare him to visit a man whom Jews would call *unclean*, as being still a heathen. The offence, also, which some of the Christians in Jerusalem took at Peter's conduct in visiting Cornelius (11: 2, 3), would not have been felt, had this centurion been a proselyte. If Cornelius had before this time enrolled himself as a proselyte to the Jewish religion, if he had professed to be no more even than *a proselyte of the gate*, — that is, a proselyte who adopted the Jewish opinions against idolatry, but who declined to receive circumcision, — the objection which arose in Peter's mind to visiting him, and which was felt so strongly by the Christians in Jerusalem, would not have existed; for there was nothing in all the Jewish law, which would hinder Jews from associating with proselytes of the gate. Cornelius had, doubtless, adopted correct opinions of God and his worship, quite as extensively as would have been required of him in order to be acknowledged a proselyte; probably even more so. Still, he had not formally united with the Jews, as an adherent to their religion, and was, therefore, in their view, still a heathen. Though, however, not united with them, he was not an idolater, but a worshipper of the true God. His mind had been singularly enlightened from above; and God was about to lead him, by remarkable circumstances, to a knowledge of the gospel. || *With all his house*; with all his family. || *Gave much alms to the people*; gave much charitable aid

him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him,

to the poor, probably among the Jews; as would appear from v. 22, where he is spoken of as highly esteemed among the Jews. Of course, others who were needy shared in his bounty; but it was peculiarly important to mention his kindness to the Jewish people, as showing a truly religious benevolence, since Jews were generally regarded by Gentiles with disfavor. || *Prayed to God always*; habitually, perhaps at all the stated times of prayer. Being resident in the country of the Jews, he knew their hours of prayer, and probably conformed to them.

Prayers to God should be accompanied with charitable deeds to men. Thus shall we show the power, as well as the form, of godliness. The character of Cornelius reminds us of the psalmist's description of a good man, in Ps. 112: 9 — "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth forever; his horn shall be exalted with honor."

3. *The ninth hour of the day*; the hour corresponding to our three o'clock in the afternoon, and one of the Jewish hours of prayer, at that period. || *An angel of God*, &c. God sent a heavenly messenger, who appeared to Cornelius *evidently*, that is, distinctly, and, as Cornelius says in the 30th verse, in the form of a man with bright clothing. Cornelius does not seem to have been in a trance; though, doubtless, his mind was much elevated by his meditations and prayers. It appears from the 30th verse, that he was observing a day of fasting; and during his solemn exercises in the latter part of the day, the angel appeared to him.

4. *He was afraid*. The splendor of the angel's clothing, as well as the suddenness of his appearance, would naturally excite a reverential dread in Cornelius. Compare Luke 2: 9. || *What is it, Lord?* an abbreviated form of the question, *What is thy demand, or request?* *What wishest*

he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household

thou? It was a respectful manner of answering to a call, or of acknowledging one's self ready to receive a message. The word translated *lord* was a term of respect, used not only in addresses to God, but also in speaking to man, when a feeling of respect was designed to be expressed. It was here addressed to the angel in human form, prompted by the reverential feelings which the angel's appearance had excited in the breast of Cornelius. || *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial, &c.*; they are remembered before God. Compare v. 31. God has heard thy prayers, and seen thy deeds of charity. He remembers thee with favor. The prayers of Cornelius, and his deeds of charity, constituted — so to speak — a kind of monument, preserving the name of Cornelius as a man whom God intended to bless. He was now about to receive from God, whom he had endeavored to serve, a special token of the divine regard.

5. *Joppa.* See 9: 36. || *Call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter;* send a message to Simon Peter, requesting a visit from him.

6. *Simon a tanner.* See 9: 43. || *Whose house is by the sea-side.* The occupation of tanners was carried on, among the ancients, in situations near the sea, or some river, both for convenience' sake, in various parts of the business, and because it was prohibited by law from being performed in the

servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour:

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

midst of a city. The workshops and dwellings of those who were of this occupation were, accordingly, in the outskirts of cities.

7. *A devout soldier.* This soldier was one of those who were appointed to be always near the centurion, so as to preserve a show of military state, to keep guard, and to go on business for him. Like Cornelius, he was a pious soldier.

9. *On the morrow, as they — drew nigh unto the city.* Joppa was about thirty miles south of Cesarea; so that the messengers from Cornelius, being despatched shortly after the angel had left him, could easily have arrived near Joppa by the sixth hour, or noon, of the following day; this being the hour mentioned at the end of the verse. || *Peter went up upon the house-top, &c.* The roofs of houses in Palestine were flat, and were covered with a composition of gravel, ashes, chalk, and similar substances. They furnished a convenient place of resort, both for enjoying private interviews with friends, and for private meditation and prayer. || *About the sixth hour;* or noon. This was one of the stated hours of prayer among the Jews. See on 3: 1.

10. *Would have eaten; desired to eat.* || *He fell into a trance.* He was placed, by a divine interposition, in an unusual mental state, in which he became, as it were, insensible to present objects, and intensely occupied with a vision from above. God was:

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth :

12 Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

about to make a special communication to Peter, and seems—so to speak—to have withdrawn him for a time from all connection with surrounding objects, that the vision which was to appear might wholly absorb his mind.

11. *Saw heaven opened.* The sky seemed to him to part asunder. Compare 7: 56, where the heavens are said to have appeared to Stephen to have opened. || *A certain vessel.* The word *vessel* is here used in a general sense, like our word *article*, or *implement*. A more particular description is immediately given. || *A great sheet, knit at the four corners;* a large, square piece of cloth, drawn up at the corners, and thus capable of holding what might be placed in it.

12. *All manner of beasts;* that is, popularly speaking, beasts of various kinds, not absolutely of every kind. The difference between *four-footed beasts* and *wild beasts*, is probably that which we mark by the terms *tame beasts* and *wild beasts*. It would seem, from Peter's language in the 14th verse, that the animals, which appeared to him thus collected together, were all such as the Jews accounted unclean—not suitable for them to use for food.

13. *Rise, Peter, kill and eat.* Though the animals were unclean—such as the Jewish law forbade to be eaten—yet a voice seemed to direct him to prepare food for himself from that collection of animals. Thus it was the divine intention to excite in his mind the thought that the ceremonial, or religious, distinction between clean animals and unclean, was abolished, and in this way to lead him at length to the thought, that Gentiles were

13 And there came a voice to him, *Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.*

14 But Peter said, *Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.*

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*

not hereafter to be regarded by Christian Jews as improper persons for them to visit and associate with.

14. *Common or unclean.* The word *common*, as here used in reference to food, means *not sacred*, not allowed by the Mosaic law, forbidden to the Jews. The person who should eat such food, would make himself *unclean*, in the view of the ceremonial laws. The eleventh chapter of Leviticus will give the reader an idea of Jewish rules and feelings in regard to food. The thought of using for food animals which were forbidden by the Mosaic law, was instantly repelled by Peter. It at once seemed to him a profanation—an act wholly inconsistent with his sacred distinction as a Jew, as one of God's people. He and his fellow-disciples had not yet discerned the proper meaning of their Lord's instructions in regard to food, as connected with moral purity. Jesus had taught (see Matt. 15: 11, 17—20. Mark 7: 15, 18—23), that real defilement pertains to the soul, not to the body, and that food does not communicate defilement, since what we eat affects only the body, not the soul, not a person's moral character. But the disciples, having been so long accustomed to Jewish ideas, could be brought only by slow degrees thoroughly to embrace new and enlarged views.

15. *What God hath cleansed; what God hath pronounced clean, or lawful.* || *Call not thou common;* do not thou consider and treat as unclean and unfit to be used. Divine authority seemed here to be arrayed against Peter's scruples of conscience; and the idea was presented to him, that the long-cherished distinction

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cor-

between clean and unclean, or sacred and profane, articles of food, was now no longer to be regarded—that it was divinely abolished. As God had, by this vision, declared every creature to be good, and nothing to be refused out of regard to the ceremonial law (compare 1 Tim. 4: 4, 5), Peter was instructed not to regard any kind of food as unlawful, or as communicating defilement to a person.

By this vision, God designed to enlighten Peter's mind not so much in regard to food, as in regard to the principle on which he should, hereafter, hold intercourse with men. He was not to treat any men as defiled, and unfit for him to associate with, because they were not Jews. The wall of separation between Gentiles and Jews was, by the religion of Jesus, broken down (compare Eph. 2: 14); and as, in the vision, animals which had been, by the Jewish law, regarded as unclean, and unfit for food, were pronounced by God as clean, and suitable to be used by a pious Jew, so Gentiles might be admitted to society and friendship with the people of God. The particular instance of food was used as a striking illustration of the principle, that defilement, in the sight of God, does not depend on external circumstances, and as a means of leading Peter to the Christian sentiment, that the grand distinction between Jews and Gentiles, so far as ceremonial cleanness was concerned, was henceforth to cease.

16. *This was done thrice.* This repetition was intended deeply to impress Peter's mind, to prepare him for the message which he was soon to receive from Cornelius, and ultimately to produce thorough conviction of God's design to make Gentiles, as

nelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the

well as Jews, partakers of his special favor.

17. *Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision—should mean.* Peter was naturally led to question with himself, for what purpose such a scene had been presented to his mind. The ultimate design of the vision he could not at once discover. This, however, was to be disclosed by the seasonable arrival of the messengers from Cornelius. The vision had produced in Peter a state of mind which exactly fitted him to receive the additional information, that he might, without contracting defilement, go to visit a heathen family.

18. *And called.* It was customary in the East, at that time, for a person designing to visit a family, either to knock at the gate, or to call aloud, till the master of the house, or some one directed by him, went out.

The evidence of a particular divine providence in the affairs of men, is too manifest here to be passed over in silence. At a certain time, messengers on a most important errand, in consequence of a communication from above, had been sent by Cornelius from Cesarea to Peter in Joppa. At the moment of their arrival, Peter was in profound thought respecting the meaning of a divine communication which had been made to him, and which was suited to prepare him for just such a message as the visitors were bringing him. The whole matter, in respect both to Cornelius and his messengers, and the apostle Peter, was evidently arranged in all its details by Him who seeth the end from the beginning, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. How striking, both to Cornelius and to Peter, must have been the evidence that the hand of God was

vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy

concerned in these events! At the same time, how clear it must have been to them, that, in all these movements, they both acted in the most voluntary manner, without the least violence to the freedom of their nature!

19. *The Spirit said unto him.* The Spirit of God conveyed information to Peter's mind. It is not necessary to suppose that an audible voice was employed. The Spirit could make such an impression as would be equivalent to an audible communication. || *Three men seek thee.* In the seventh verse, we learn that Cornelius had sent three men. The coincidences which were now becoming manifest between what had happened to Peter and what Cornelius had been directed to do, were very remarkable. Peter could not fail to discern the special interposition of divine providence, and would be prepared for the additional direction to accompany the messengers of Cornelius. We cannot but notice, here, how readily God has access to men's souls, — with what ease he can excite such thoughts and purposes in their minds as correspond with events, which they are to be instrumental in effecting.

20. *For I have sent them.* Cornelius had been directed by an angel from God (vs. 3, 5), to send for Peter. It was God, then, in a special manner, who had sent these men.

angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, say-

23. *Certain brethren from Joppa.* The number was six, as we read in 11:12. It was both a measure of prudence on the part of Peter, and a wise providential arrangement, that he should take these brethren with him. He might have occasion to consult them. Their personal acquaintance with the transactions in which Peter might be engaged, would enable them to bear public testimony in regard to his conduct on the occasion, and would more easily secure kind feeling on the part of Christian Jews who might hear of the event, and not be prepared at once fully to enter into the plan of God for extending the gospel to the Gentiles. Peter's statement, in 11:12, of the fact that certain Christian brethren accompanied him to Cesarea, appears to have been of some service (see 11:18) in preventing an unfavorable state of mind on the subject at Jerusalem. — Prudence is becoming, even in an accredited messenger of God.

24. *Cornelius waited for them;* was waiting, in expectation of their arrival. || *Had called together his kinsmen, &c.* He was anxious for the spiritual welfare of his relatives and friends, as well as for his own. An instructive example!

25. *Cornelius — fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.* As Cornelius was already acquainted with the character of the true God, and

ing, Stand up: I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

was a pious man, we cannot consider him as designing to pay religious worship to Peter. The word *worship*, in our language, was formerly used in a wider sense than it now is, and signified special *respect* and *honor* given by one man to another. Compare Luke 14:10. Cornelius intended to show his deep respect for Peter, as an ambassador of God, specially sent with a divine message. He knew that, among the orientals, such respect was often shown by prostrating the body on the ground, or falling down at a person's feet. As Peter was God's messenger, he was considered worthy of special respect; and Cornelius, therefore, threw himself at his feet. For, though the Romans were not in the habit of thus prostrating themselves, except to their gods, yet, since Peter was God's messenger, sent on a special embassy to Cornelius, the Roman centurion felt towards him an unusual reverence, as if he must be superior to common men; and this reverence, we may almost say, instinctively impelled him to fall at Peter's feet.

26. *Stand up; I myself also am a man.* As prostration, by the Romans, was not usually performed to a man, but was regarded by them as an act of worship, proper to be rendered only to one of their acknowledged deities, Peter instantly checked the excessive reverence which Cornelius was showing him, and would not allow him to remain prostrate. It seemed to argue too deep a respect for Peter in the Roman's mind—a respect approaching too nearly to what was due only to a divinity. Hence Peter disclaimed any higher rank than that of a man, and was unwilling that reverence should be paid to him, other than what is suitable between man and man. The honor which Christ had put on Peter, in making him an eminent apostle, was

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath

far from elating him with pride, or ministering to vanity. He still felt that he was but a man—a man, too, whose past associations and present spiritual employment were most harmonious with simplicity in heart and life, and whose feelings, both as a member of society, and as a servant of Christ, revolted from the thought of having special external honor heaped on him. While, then, in accordance with scriptural directions, we pay honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7. 1 Pet. 2:17), let us never arrogate it to ourselves; and let us always kindly and courteously decline external tokens of respect, when they evidently transcend the limits of sobriety. It is well for ministers of the gospel to remember that they "never appear more truly great than when they arrogate least to themselves."

28. *An unlawful thing*; a thing contrary to the Jews' religious law, and therefore held by the Jews as a violation of religious duty, or an act of impiety. || *One of another nation*; one not a Jew, either by birth or by religion—a Gentile. The declaration of the apostle that it was unlawful for a Jew to keep company with, or to come to, one of another nation, is to be understood as showing the religious scruples which prevailed among the Jews, in regard to their associating with Gentiles. These scruples had been carried to an extravagant pitch—beyond what was required by the law, as given by Moses. That law was not so exclusive as wholly to prohibit Jews from visiting, or having dealings with, persons of a different nation. But the Jewish rabbis had made numerous additions to the law of Moses, and enjoined these additions on the conscientious observance of the people, as strictly as the very precepts of Moses. The scruples to which Peter here refers, and which had come to

showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and

be regarded as religiously sacred among the Jews, though originating in the precepts of Moses, had been carried to an undue extent. In ceremonial observances the Jews were very credulous, and easily imposed on by their rabbis. || *I should not call any man common or unclean.* The intent of the vision which had appeared to Peter was now distinctly perceived by him. The opinion, so tenaciously held by the Jews, that Gentiles were unclean, and that Jews ought not, therefore, to associate with them, was no longer to be regarded. To visit a Gentile was no longer to be regarded as an act of impiety.

29. *Without gainsaying*; without saying any thing against it; without hesitation.

30. *Four days ago.* The day on which Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius was the fourth from that on which the angel appeared to Cornelius. It appears from vs. 7, 8, that Cornelius sent his messengers on the same day when the angel appeared to him; and from vs. 9, 17, that they arrived at Simon's house on the next day. The day following (v. 23), which was the third, Peter set out for Cesarea, and on the day after (v. 24) arrived at the centurion's house. || *I was fasting until this hour.* Cornelius

call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner, by the sea-side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

had, on the fourth day preceding, abstained from food to the same hour of that day, as the hour when he was now conversing with Peter. || *The ninth hour.* See v. 3. || *Bright clothing;* shining white. Compare Matt. 28: 3. John 20: 12.

31—33. Compare vs. 4—6.

34. *God is no respecter of persons.* God has no personal partialities, so as to favor one man above another, merely because he belongs to a particular nation. Peter now discerned to the full extent, and declared, that external circumstances are not the ground on which God proceeds, in giving his kind regards to men. In God's view, it is immaterial whether a man belongs to any one nation or to another. It is the character of the person, to which God looks. It is the state of his heart, which decides whether he is in the favor of God or not. This is expressed in the following verse.

35. *In every nation*; whether the person be a Jew, or a Gentile. || *He that feareth him*; whoever has true piety towards God. The *fear of God* often means, in the Bible, a *truly pious reverence* for his character and commands. Compare Ps. 15: 4. 111: 10. Job 28: 28. Acts 9: 31. || *Worketh righteousness*; habitually does what is right in respect to God and to man.

36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preach-

ing peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all :)

The principle on which God accepts a person, is, his having a state of heart conformed to the divine requisitions, irrespectively of the circumstances of his birth and his civil connections. So the prophet Micah (6: 8) declares — “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?” This principle by no means implies, that the kind of religious system under which a person has been brought up, is a matter of no consequence; for observation, as well as the nature of the case, shows that the false religions which prevail where the gospel is not known, really cherish and strengthen the wicked propensities of men, and make their devotees more and more unrighteous, and unfit for God’s approval; and that, with very rare exceptions, it is only those who enjoy a religion from heaven, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, that do fear God and work righteousness. For it is only the revelation in the Bible, that conveys pure religious truth, that exhibits the very provision which is needed for man’s wants, and which, as being a system of truth, and proceeding from God, is accompanied with the Holy Spirit’s influences, enlightening and renewing men’s souls. Hence it is almost in vain to search for pious men among idolaters. Should the case exist, however, of a person in a heathen land, ignorant of the gospel, yet becoming convinced of his need of pardon, and turning to God with a penitent heart, sincerely seeking to discover and to do his will, — such a person would find acceptance with God. And on the other hand, no one is accepted merely because he lives in a land enlightened by a revelation from heaven. He must receive the religion into his heart, and under its influence habitually fear God and live righteously, in order to be accepted. If any one, not having yet

heard the gospel, possesses this spirit, he will embrace the gospel when it is made known to him; because the gospel, from its holy nature, and its gracious provision for man’s spiritual wants, will commend itself to his heart. Generally, almost universally, however, in cases of true piety, it is the gospel already known that has been the powerful instrument of God in making the heart right with him. While, then, the principle which the apostle Peter so distinctly presented, commends itself to every honest mind, it also confirms the necessity of maintaining and extending the gospel, as the divinely appointed means of bringing men to fear God and work righteousness.

36. *The word which God sent, &c.*; the instruction, or doctrines, which God sent to the Jews. Peter here refers to the gospel. || *Preaching peace.* The word *peace* is here used in that extensive sense in which it is often employed in the Scriptures, as signifying a *state of happiness*, particularly *spiritual* happiness. This was proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and was to result from his gospel. He is the author of spiritual good to men. His gospel is God’s announcement of pardon and eternal life to those who heartily embrace it. One particular in this spiritual prosperity, or peace, in reference specially to the times of the apostles, was the removal of that spirit of unkindness, which was cherished mutually on the part of Jews and Gentiles. As the apostle was now, for the first time, addressing a company which consisted mostly of Gentiles, it is not unlikely that he had in view this feature of Christ’s doctrine. The tendency of the principles which Jesus inculcated was, to introduce concord between Jews and Gentiles, who had so long been separated on religious grounds. || *He is Lord of all*; not only of Jews, but also of Gentiles. Jesus Christ was appointed the spiritual Lord of the human

37 That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

38 How God anointed Jesus of

family; and, as such, men of all nations, as well as Jews, are to be instructed in his religion.

37. *Ye know.* Many Jews lived in Cesarea, by whom a general knowledge of events concerning Jesus would naturally be spread through the city. Philip, the evangelist, had also before this visited Cesarea (8: 40), and doubtless preached the gospel there. Still, the knowledge which Cornelius and his friends had obtained of the Christian religion, was very incomplete; they had received, probably, only fragments of information, and had not been instructed as to the great design of the events which had taken place. Peter proceeded, accordingly, to unfold the principal facts pertaining to the life and death of Jesus, and to show the connection of these facts with the salvation of believers. || *Began from Galilee.* Jesus, though born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matt. 2: 1), was a resident of Galilee. Matt. 2: 22, 23. Luke 2: 39. His disciples, also, were Galileans. Acts 2: 7. The doctrine of Christ may, then, be traced to Galilee as the place of its earthly origin. || *After the baptism which John preached.* John the Baptist came before Christ, to announce his approach and summon the people to become prepared for the Messiah by repentance. Their repentance and readiness to receive the Messiah they were to profess by baptism; so that the baptism which John inculcated, held an important place among the circumstances connected with the coming of the Messiah; it was both a sign and a pledge of the repentance which would be a cardinal point in the Messiah's religion. See Matt. 3: 1, 2, 6, 11.

38. *How God anointed Jesus, &c.* As, in a literal anointing, the oil was poured on a person, so the Spirit is said to be poured forth on Jesus; that is, it was abundantly bestowed

Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

on him, that he might perform his holy work. The ceremony, also, of anointing with oil was performed at the designation of kings (2 Sam. 2: 4, 5: 3) and high priests (Ex. 29: 7, 29) to their office. As this ceremony was so eminently a token of setting apart and qualifying a person for a sacred office, the term *anoint* was figuratively used, even when there was not a literal anointing, to signify *setting apart* and *qualifying* for a certain office. Jesus was *set apart* as the Messiah, and abundantly *qualified* for his office, by receiving the Holy Spirit and power from on high. Thus, in John 3: 34, it is declared, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" that is, gives it to him not in any stinted measure, but without limitation; anoints him with it, pours it on him profusely. Compare Is. 61: 1—3—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek," &c.; a passage which our Lord, as we see in Luke 4: 18—21, expressly applied to himself. The Holy Spirit, with which Jesus was thus copiously endowed, was a *Spirit of power*. The power and authority of Jesus were manifested in his teaching and in his miracles. || *Who went about, &c.*; who occupied himself in going about among the people, in the whole country of the Jews. || *Doing good.* What a comprehensive description of our Lord's life!

"Dispensing good, where'er he came,
The labors of his life were love."

Well might Pilate ask the inflamed multitude who demanded the life of Jesus—"Why? what evil hath he done?" Luke 23: 22. || *For God was with him.* This Nicodemus also perceived, and honestly acknowledged. "No man," said he (John 3: 2), "can do these miracles which

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem ; whom they slew and hanged on a tree :

40 Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ;

41 Not to all the people, but thou doest, except God be with him."

39. *In the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem* ; in the country, generally speaking, of the Jews, and in the city of Jerusalem in particular. || *Slew and hanged on a tree*. See on 5:30, where this same expression occurs.

41. *Who did eat and drink with him, &c.* In Luke 24:42, 43, and in John 21:12, 13, we have accounts of the Saviour's partaking of food with his disciples after his resurrection. Doubtless other similar occasions occurred. The apostle Peter refers to this fact, as showing the intimacy of Jesus with his disciples after his resurrection, and as proving that his being raised up from the dead was no illusion. The disciples were favored with many familiar interviews with him ; he condescended even to eat and drink with them. It was rendered an indubitable fact, that he was raised up from the dead. The statement in this verse shows, what also appears from the accounts in the Gospels, that Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared only to his disciples. Compare also Acts 1:3. It is worthy of distinct notice, as showing the strict regard to truth which the disciples and the sacred writers observed, that they expressly limit the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, to his confidential friends. Had they been writing a fiction, the love of the marvellous and a fervid imagination would probably have led them to relate pretended appearances to the people at large, or at least to those distinguished men, who were so active in seeking to thwart his designs and in compassing his death. But they pretend to nothing more than was

unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even to us*, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge

strictly true. While, however, the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection were thus confined, so great was the number to whom he showed himself alive (appearing not only to individuals more than once, but repeatedly to the apostles assembled together, and on one occasion to "above five hundred brethren" — 1 Cor. 15:5—7), so various were the circumstances in which he appeared, such was the well-known integrity of the witnesses, and such their readiness to stake their all, for time and eternity, on this fact, about which, moreover, they could not be in a mistake, that the evidence of his resurrection was placed beyond dispute.

42. *And he commanded us to preach unto the people*. "Go ye," said the Saviour, (Matt. 28:19), "and teach all nations." Compare, also, Mark 16:15. Peter was able now to comprehend more fully the meaning of the Saviour's direction, that the gospel should be preached "to every creature." || *Ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead*; appointed of God to be the Judge of all men, the living and the dead. The great truth, that there is to be a final judgment, and that men are to be awarded to their endless destinies according to a righteous sentence, it was of immense importance distinctly to announce ; so that, in anticipation of that judgment, men might avail themselves of the divinely appointed plan for obtaining the remission of their sins. It was, also, highly important to present the Lord Jesus before men, in the majesty of his character and station, as the final Judge. He was not only the crucified man, the object of Jewish hatred and rejection ; he had been exalted to the high station of Lord of all and final Judge of the

of quick and dead.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

human race. This important truth of the Christian religion, the apostle Paul also explicitly declared to the Athenians, as a chief reason why men should repent and embrace the gospel. *Acts 17:31.* Our Lord had also taught, before his crucifixion, that the final judgment of men was to be a part of his official work (*John 5:22, 27*); and he had, according to Peter's declaration, instructed his apostles to bring forward this truth in its due prominence.

Thus in the same wondrous person what condescension and what majesty are united! He who bore our sins in his own body on the cross (*1 Pet. 2:24*), is to be the final Judge, whose sentence will be an irreversible one. He who was crucified through weakness (*2 Cor. 13:4*), is to reign in power. And if we would share in the glories of that kingdom of which he is the Head, we must trust in him, and obey him, as the One who made himself of no reputation (*Phil. 2:7*), but who yet is highly exalted as the final Judge, on whose decision our everlasting state is to depend.

43. *To him give all the prophets witness.* The general current of prophecy in the Old Testament testifies of Christ; the prophets generally bear testimony concerning him, more or less directly. So our Lord himself spoke of Moses and all the prophets as having written concerning him. See *Luke 24:27, 44.* || *That through his name, whosoever believeth in him, &c.* Remission of sins seems to be here taken as an eminent part of the Saviour's blessings, for the whole of them. The testimony of prophecy in general was, that the Messiah should bless his followers with distinguished happiness; and particularly are forgiveness and holiness promised through him. See *Is. 53:4—6, 11. Zech. 13:1.* See, also, *Is. 28:16.* The

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed, were astonished,

general prosperity, promised to those who should believe in the Messiah, being spiritual prosperity, involves in it forgiveness of sins; so that this blessing, whether distinctly mentioned by a prophet or not, was really predicted. When it is mentioned, it is regarded as introductory to the fulness of bliss which the Messiah was to bestow. It is through the Messiah, that pardon and all the blessings of salvation are to be obtained. Compare *2:21. 13:38, 39.* How interesting to Cornelius and his friends, must have been this exposition of the gospel! A method of pardon was now unfolded to them, which commended itself to their consciences and hearts; they saw the appropriateness of the gospel, and at once admitted its light and its consolations. So let us receive the truth into our hearts, and obtain, through faith in Jesus, the forgiveness of our sins, peace with God, and eternal life.

44. *While Peter yet spake;* or, as would appear from *11:15*, while Peter was yet speaking, not having formally finished his address, but having communicated so much knowledge of the gospel to his willing and obedient hearers, as was sufficient to make them fasten their faith on Jesus, as their Redeemer and Lord. Their hearts being already prepared to receive the apostle's instruction, as soon as Jesus was made known to them in his capacity of spiritual Lord and Saviour, they acknowledged his claims, and God bore testimony to the reality of their discipleship. || *The Holy Ghost fell on all, &c.* The extraordinary influences of the Spirit were bestowed on Cornelius and his company, enabling them to speak in foreign tongues (see *v. 46*), as well as in their own.

45. *They of the circumcision;* the Christian Jews, who had come with

as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak

Peter from Joppa, as is related in v. 23. || *On the Gentiles also*; Gentiles, who had not become professed proselytes to the Jewish religion. The Jews had always supposed that Gentiles, in order to receive the blessings of the Messiah's dispensation, must first enrol themselves among the Jews. But now an event had occurred which was at variance with their long-cherished views; and they naturally looked with astonishment on these favored Gentiles.

46. *Speak with tongues*; in languages other than their own, and in which they had not been educated. Compare 2: 4, 7, 8. || *Magnify God*; praise him for his great kindness, manifested in the gospel, and specially bestowed on them.

47. *Can any man forbid water, &c.* Perceiving the unquestionable evidence, that Cornelius and his friends had become true believers in Jesus, Peter had no hesitation in enjoining on them the duty of baptism. It was a privilege, too, from which no human being had a right to debar them, now that God had so signally shown his approval of them. Compare 11: 17. They had believed in Jesus, as really as the converted Jews had; and as on believing Jews, so on believing Gentiles (according to the commission of Jesus to his apostles—Matt. 28: 19. Mark 16: 16), rested the command to be baptized. || *Which have received the Holy Ghost, &c.* It is remarkable, that, in the case of Cornelius, the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were imparted *before* baptism, while, on previous occasions, the bestowal of these gifts took place *after* baptism. Compare 2: 38. 8: 15—17. The reason seems to be, that, as Cornelius and his company were Gentiles, and this was the first instance of the gospel's being presented to Gentiles, unquestionable evidence of the reality of their con-

with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy

version to God, and of their acceptance with him, was needful, in order wholly to relieve the minds of Peter and the other Christian Jews, then present, from the conscientious scruples which had so long occupied them to the prejudice of the Gentiles. It was necessary, too, that Peter and his associates should be convinced, beyond a doubt, of its being the Lord's will that converted Gentiles, as well as converted Jews, should be baptized and admitted into the Christian church. By this instance, too, the great body of believing Jews was to be instructed in the Saviour's will respecting the Gentiles; so that contention among the Christians in regard to the Gentiles might either not arise in the church, or might be met by an unquestionable manifestation of the divine will. The distinguishing outward sign of God's acceptance and blessing, namely, the extraordinary influences of the Spirit, imparting supernatural gifts, was therefore granted. The duty of Peter, on this occasion, became perfectly clear; and no man could rightly forbid these Gentiles to be baptized and admitted into the Christian church, as well as believing Jews.

Though this instance of the Spirit's being granted *before* baptism, is the only one on record in the Scriptures, and was therefore a departure from the ordinary manner in which God bestowed his special favors (compare 2: 38), yet it is a clear proof that the external ordinance of baptism is not a necessary preliminary to the reception of God's special favor, or to the manifestation of his pardoning love. Cornelius was evidently in favor with God, even before he had been made fully acquainted with the gospel—though he had not in his own mind a satisfactory view of this—and after having been instructed in its leading facts by the apostle, the miraculous

Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

CHAPTER XI.

1 Peter, being accused for going in to the Gentiles, 5 maketh his defence, 18 which is accepted. 19 The gospel being spread into Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, Barnabas is sent to confirm them. 26 The disciples there are first called Christians. 27

influences of the Spirit, which were then the outward manifestation of the divine acceptance, were *before* his baptism freely shed upon him. Baptism was enjoined, in his case, not only after embracing the gospel, but also after the extraordinary gift of the Spirit. While, then, we conscientiously observe our Lord's command *to be baptized*, as well as *to believe in him*, let us not place reliance on an external rite, as securing for us the divine favor; but regard the external rite as the divinely appointed token of our believing in Christ, and as the pledge of our faithfully adhering to the Saviour.

48. *And he commanded them to be baptized.* This command was, doubtless, obeyed. Whether baptism was administered on this occasion by Peter, or, under his direction, by some one of those who accompanied him, does not appear from the language here employed. || *In the name of the Lord*; that is, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, acknowledging him as their Lord. Baptism in his name was the public avowal of their being his disciples.

CHAPTER XI.

Soon after the transactions related in the preceding chapter, and before Peter had the opportunity of a personal interview with the brethren in Jerusalem on the subject, tidings of the remarkable event had spread in Judea, and reached the city. The conduct of Peter excited amazement among many of the disciples, as it

They send relief to the brethren in Judea in time of famine.

AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4 But Peter rehearsed the matter

was so different from what even Christian Jews, whose minds had not yet been emancipated from their long-cherished prejudices, would consider right. He therefore made a clear statement of the circumstances of the case, and appealed to the concurrent testimony of the six brethren who had accompanied him from Joppa to Cesarea. His statements not only produced acquiescence on the part of those who had been disposed to contend, but led them to acknowledge with praise the goodness of God in converting Gentiles to Christ.

2. *They that were of the circumcision*; Jews, who had become Christians. They still, however, adhered to Jewish ceremonies, and were jealous of any innovation on their accustomed religious practices. || *Contended with him.* They called in question the propriety of his conduct. It was, doubtless, the more forward among them, who, without waiting to receive an account from Peter himself, took it on themselves to censure him. His fellow-apostles, and the more judicious of the brethren, would prudently and generously wait to hear his account of the matter, and would weigh the reasons which had influenced him.

3. *Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, &c.* Uncircumcised persons were regarded by the Jews as ceremonially unclean, and therefore unsuitable for them to associate with. Compare 10: 28.

4. *But Peter — expounded it by order, &c.;* explained the manner, de-

from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descending, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay, and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God

hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, the

tailing the facts in regular order as they occurred. Peter's mildness and condescension in explaining the matter throughout, finely contrasted with the heat and seeming arrogance of those who were disposed to contend with him. A worthy example to ministers of the gospel.

5—14. Compare 10: 9—33.

14. *Words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.* From Peter, Cornelius and his family were to hear the gospel, that is, the method and the terms according to which salvation is granted. For though Cornelius was really a pious man, and therefore in the way to salvation, yet he had not been instructed in the peculiar principles on which God bestows pardon and eternal life. He had not, therefore, the benefit of a well-assured hope of salvation, or of those salutary influences which flow from a correct knowledge and reception of those principles. It is implied in the language of the angel to Cornelius, that the instruction to be communicated by Peter would be personally welcomed by Cornelius and his family. True religion, as well as final salva-

tion, is a personal thing. Each one, for himself, must become a disciple of the Saviour, if he would, for himself, attain everlasting life.

15. *And as I began to speak.* The idea is, not *as soon as I had begun to speak*; but, *before I had finished speaking, and not long after I had begun.* It would appear by this remark, that the apostle was interrupted in his address by the unexpected descent of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his friends. Accordingly, the sacred writer says in 10: 44, "While Peter yet spake" [was yet speaking], &c. Peter had presented the great facts of Jesus' having come as the promised Messiah, and of his death and resurrection; and had distinctly mentioned the necessity of believing in him, or of becoming his disciples, for the remission of sins. At this point, the sum and substance of the gospel having been exhibited, the very kind and amount of religious truth which was required by Cornelius' state of mind, and that of his family, the Spirit, in attestation both of the truth of what had been declared, and of the honest and heartfelt reception of it by

Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Je-

sus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled

Cornelius and his friends, shed forth the extraordinary gifts, without waiting for Peter formally to complete his address. || *As on us at the beginning*; that is, at the beginning of the Lord's imparting these extraordinary gifts; on the day of Pentecost, when the promise of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (Acts 1: 5, 8) began to be fulfilled. Compare 2: 4.

16. *Then remembered I the word of the Lord, &c.* See 1: 5.

17. *What was I, that I could withstand God?* The Lord had so clearly revealed his will, and put my duty beyond all question, that, had I acted differently, I should have been guilty of opposing God, and of attempting to hinder what he was manifestly doing. How could I, a mere man, and an acknowledged servant of God, take the attitude of opposing him?

18. *They—glorified God, saying, &c.* They saw clearly that God had made known his will in regard to this matter; that Peter had acted only in accordance with God's direction; and that God had signified his approval in an unquestionable manner. They were consequently led to give praise to God, and gratefully to acknowledge that Gentiles, as well as Jews, were by the gospel to become partakers of eternal life. They were, doubtless, equally amazed and gratified at the unexpected event. And even though they might not all have become entirely free from their Jewish prejudices, they could not but rejoice in the extension of the divine favor to the Gentiles. The acquiescence, however, which the brethren felt in Peter's views and conduct, seems to have been afterwards op-

posed, or interrupted, by some who were tenacious of the Mosaic law. See 15: 1, 5.

Well, indeed, may Christians praise God, when they see the gospel spreading over the earth, and extending its holy, saving influences among the benighted and the hopeless! All national prejudices must yield to the power of Christian love; and wherever God, in his providence, opens the way for the gospel, we ought, with gladness and gratitude, and from the instinctive promptings of a Christian heart, to embrace the privilege of communicating it to all our fellow-men.

19. In the remaining part of this chapter, the sacred historian, after mentioning in general the departure of many persecuted Christians out of the country of the Jews, records the introduction of the gospel, and the establishment of the Christian church, at Antioch in Syria. As Antioch became, in those apostolic times, a distinguished central point, second in importance only to Jerusalem for the dissemination of the gospel, particularly in reference to the apostle Paul's labors, to which the writer intended soon to confine his account, it was natural that a particular statement should be given of the origin of the Christian cause in that city.

They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, &c. The writer had already related, in 8: 1, that bitter persecution arose in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen, and that the Christians in general forsook the city. Though many remained in the country parts of Judea, and in Samaria

as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men

(8:1), as being comparatively safe while away from the immediate notice of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, others removed still farther, and went beyond the Jewish territory, both for greater safety and for more widely making known the gospel among Jews in foreign parts. || *Phenice*; Phenicia, in the north-western part of Palestine, on the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Of this region Tyre and Sidon were the chief cities. The persecuted Christians would here find sympathizing brethren, as well as countrymen to whom they might communicate the gospel. For we learn from Mark 3:8, that, in the days of our Saviour, many from Tyre and Sidon became interested in his instructions; and from Acts 21:3, 4, that Paul, on one of his voyages, landed at Tyre, and was most kindly entertained there by Christians; also from Acts 27:3, that, when he was on his voyage to Rome, he met with a similar reception at Sidon. || *Cyprus*; a large island in the Mediterranean sea, north-west from Palestine, not far from the coast of Syria and of Asia Minor. It was an extremely fertile island, abounding in wine, oil, honey, and various mineral productions. Its inhabitants were distinguished for luxury and sensuality. Two of its cities are mentioned in the New Testament; namely, Salamis and Paphos. Acts 13:5, 6. In the latter of these was a celebrated temple of the heathen goddess Venus, who was hence frequently called the *Paphian* goddess. Jews were residing on this island; and in Salamis, at least, they had synagogues. 13:5. Cyprus was travelled over by Paul and Barnabas on their missionary tour through Asia Minor (13:6), and was subsequently visited by Barnabas and Mark (15:39), for the purpose of spreading the gospel. It had once been the residence — perhaps it was the birth-

of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

place — of Barnabas. 4:36. || *Antioch*. Two cities of this name are mentioned in the book of Acts — Antioch in Pisidia (13:14), a province of Asia Minor; and Antioch, the chief city of Syria, the country north of Palestine. It is the latter which is here meant. It was situated on the river Orontes, not far from the sea-coast of Syria. It was one of the most powerful cities of the East, considered as the third, in rank, of the Roman empire, Rome and Alexandria being its superiors. It possessed great commercial opulence, and enjoyed the privilege of being governed by its own laws. It was a place of great resort for Jews. The Jewish inhabitants, as well as the Greeks, were allowed the exercise of their own religion without molestation. The commercial importance of the city, and the religious toleration granted to its inhabitants, were eminently favorable to its becoming a central point of Christian influence. || *Preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only*. These persons left Judea before Peter's visit to Cornelius, and before they felt at liberty to introduce the gospel among the Gentiles.

20. *Cyrene*. A part of Africa was named *Libya Cyrenaica*, of which Cyrene was the chief city. It lay a few miles from the Mediterranean coast, and was the residence of great numbers of Jews. See on 2:10. || *Spake unto the Grecians*. There is diversity of opinion, on the question, whether we should understand here, by *Grecians*, native Greeks, that is, Gentiles, or Jews by birth, who, in consequence of living among Greeks, had adopted the Greek language; such as in 6:1 are denominated Grecians. Some critical editions of the Greek Testament have in this place the word which would be properly translated *Greeks*, that is, Gentile Greeks; and others, the word by which *Jews* are designated who had

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of those things came unto the ears of the church

adopted the Greek language. It is, perhaps, impossible to decide which is the genuine reading. The connection, however, appears most to favor the opinion that the sacred writer is here speaking of *Gentile Greeks*, to whom the men of Cyprus and Cyrene made known the gospel. In this 20th verse, the word *Grecians* seems used in contrast with the word *Jews* in the 19th verse, and to show that the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who visited Antioch, communicated the gospel to another class of men besides those who had heard it from the persons mentioned in the 19th verse. The subsequent verses, too, favor the opinion that it is the introduction of the gospel to the people of Antioch *in general*, which is related in this verse. If this be the right view of the case, it is important to bear in mind that some considerable interval of time had elapsed between the occurrences related in the 19th verse and those in the 20th. The 19th relates to what took place very shortly after the martyrdom of Stephen, and before the Christian Jews felt at liberty to preach to the Gentiles. The 20th verse relates to what took place after Peter's visit to Cornelius, and when the duty was made manifest of imparting the gospel to the Gentiles. The expression *some of them*, in the 20th verse, does indeed seem to indicate some of the very persons who were scattered abroad just after the death of Stephen, and therefore to oppose the suggestion that they went to Antioch at a considerably later period. This, however, does not necessarily follow; for, if they *were* some of those very persons, still their going to Antioch might not have taken place till after tidings had been spread abroad respecting Cornelius' admission to the church, and the consequent liberty and duty of pro-

which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that

mulgating the gospel among the Gentiles. It seems, therefore, on the whole, most probable that, in this 20th verse, the historian designed to mention the extension of the gospel to the Gentile inhabitants of Antioch.

21. *The hand of the Lord was with them*; the Lord aided them by his power. || *A great number believed*, &c. Thus the persecution at Jerusalem was signally overruled for the good of the church, in extending a knowledge of the gospel, and multiplying the number of believers. Stephen's blood had been shed, and a strong pillar had been thrown down. But the enemy triumphs in vain. A martyr's blood becomes the seed of the church. Compare Phil. 1:12.

22. *They sent forth Barnabas*, &c. Such seems to have been the custom of the church in Jerusalem. When the gospel was introduced into a city, and converts were multiplying, the brethren in Jerusalem kindly and promptly sent to such a place, for the furtherance of the good work, some one, or more, of their number possessing the requisite endowments. Thus, as we read in 8:14, when Samaria received the gospel, the apostles at Jerusalem sent thither two of their number — Peter and John. For strengthening the Christian cause at Antioch, Barnabas was sent — an active preacher, and a man highly esteemed. See 4:36, 37. 9:27. This arrangement was eminently important and appropriate, when all the regions which were thus visited were destitute of permanent means of religious influence, and when the gospel was to be first established in such regions.

23. *When he — had seen the grace of God*; perceived the blessing with which God had favored the recent converts at Antioch. || *That with*

with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord; that with heartfelt purpose, with firm resolution, they would persist in obedience to the Lord. Whether they were Jews or Gentiles, they would meet with many obstacles in their course of Christian duty, and, without firm resolution in piety, would be overcome by temptations.

It is not enough to enter on the path of faith and obedience. It is by patient continuance in piety (Rom. 2: 7), that we are to prove the sincerity of our profession, and to arrive at eternal life. “If ye continue in my word,” said the Saviour (John 8: 31), “then are ye my disciples indeed;” and “we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” Heb. 3: 14.

24. *For he was a good man, &c.* A brief commendation, but extremely comprehensive. The term *good* here means, not only *upright* and *pious*, but also *kind* and *beneficent*. The sincere piety of Barnabas was united to genuine benignity. He was a pious man, whose tender sympathy and condescension attracted universal esteem and love. What an instructive lesson, too, does the last clause of this verse teach us! Would ministers and Christians be eminently useful as instruments of adding much people to the Lord, let them seek to be like Barnabas — “good men, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.”

25. *Then departed Barnabas, &c.* The demand for ministerial labor in Antioch was very great; and Barnabas, who had from the first perceived the sincerity of Saul’s professed change of character, and had interested himself in his behalf, introducing him to the apostles, and re-

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

moving the unfavorable impressions of the brethren respecting him (9: 26, 27), now went to his place of abode to procure him as a fellow-laborer. || *Tarsus*; the chief city in the province of Cilicia (21: 39. 22: 3), not very remote from Antioch, as Cilicia bordered on Syria. See on 9: 11.

26. *And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.* The name *Christians* was not assumed, at first, by the disciples themselves, since the sacred writers do not use it so frequently, nor in such connections, as they would, had the disciples originally attached it to themselves. They sought not for any name that would be a party distinction, and that might have the bad effect of cherishing the unreasonable prejudices of unbelieving Jews. They called themselves *the brethren, the disciples, believers*. Nor did the Jews give them the name *Christian*; for Christ — that is, Messiah — was too honored a name for Jews, still retaining hostility to Jesus, to employ for such a purpose. It would be equivalent to the title *followers of the Messiah*, and might be construed into a tacit acknowledgment that Jesus was the Messiah. The Jews would be more likely to designate the followers of Jesus by some epithet that would, at once, express contempt — such, for instance, as the epithet *Nazarens*. See Acts 24: 5. The name arose, then, from among the Gentile inhabitants of Antioch. It was common then, as now, for persons who avowed some distinguished individual as their leader, embracing his opinions and devoting themselves to his interests, to be denominated by a name derived from the name of that individual. As the disciples spoke so much of Christ,

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be

and held him in such reverence, the name *Christian* naturally arose from that circumstance, as designating those who ranged themselves under the banner of Christ. Whether such a term would be used in contempt, or simply in recognition of the leader whom the persons followed that were thus called, would depend on the views which were had of the leader, and on various other circumstances. It does not appear from the language of the sacred historians, that the name was originated by any contemptuous feeling. It is, however, very likely that it was associated with feelings of contempt among some of those who first used it; because the followers of Christ made no concealment of the fact that he had been crucified. They rather exhibited it, as a most important event. To be a follower of *a crucified one* would appear to heathen and worldly minds no very honorable distinction. 1 Cor. 1:18. The name, however, was subsequently found a very convenient one to distinguish the believers both from the mass of Gentiles and from unbelieving Jews, and it appears to have come into common use. See 26:28. 1 Pet. 4:16.

27. *Prophets*; a class of religious teachers often mentioned in the New Testament, who enjoyed special divine influence in exhortation and preaching, and were enabled at times to foretell future events.

28. *Agabus*. This person is mentioned again, as a prophet, in 21:10. || *Signified*; made known. || *That there should be great dearth throughout all the world*. The word here translated *world* is one of those indefinite terms which are employed, according to circumstances, in a wider or a narrower signification. It was sometimes used with reference

great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the

to the *Roman empire*; and sometimes it meant *Palestine*, the country of the Jews, including, perhaps, the neighboring countries. Compare Luke 2:1. It here means the *country of the Jews*; since, in consequence of the prediction by Agabus, the Christians in Antioch determined to send relief to the Christians in *Judea*. || *Which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cesar*. Claudius was the fifth Roman emperor, and reigned thirteen years—from the year of our Lord 41 to the year 54. During his reign, there were four times in which different parts of the empire were afflicted with famine. The first occurred during the first and second years of his reign, and caused much suffering in the city of Rome itself. The second occurred in the fourth year of his reign, and was particularly felt in Judea. The third was a time of scarcity in Greece, in the ninth year of his reign: and in the eleventh year, the fourth took place, in which Rome itself was again visited. The famine foretold by Agabus was, doubtless, the second here mentioned, in which Judea was afflicted. Josephus, the Jewish historian, makes mention, in his *Antiquities* (20.2.5), of this famine, as occasioning great distress and many deaths. He relates that the distresses of the Jews, in consequence of it, were greatly relieved by Helena, queen of Adiabene, who had become very favorable to the Jewish religion.

A visit of hers to Jerusalem occurred during this famine; and, being deeply affected by the prevalent distress, she sent to Alexandria in Egypt for a large quantity of grain, and to the isle of Cyprus for dried figs, and distributed to the necessitous inhabitants of Jerusalem.

29. *Then the disciples—determined to send relief, &c.* The spirit of

brethren which dwelt in Judea.
30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

CHAPTER XII.

1 King Herod persecuteth the Christians, killeth James, and imprisoneth Peter:

charity and liberality uniformly marked the early disciples. They felt themselves to be members of one body, and sympathized with one another. Compare Rom. 12: 13, 15. Gal. 6: 10. Thus, in Jerusalem, some years before, none of the disciples were allowed to remain in want. Those who had property employed it for the benefit of those who had none, so that there was not any among them that lacked. 4: 34. It is well to notice, too, the extent to which the disciples in Antioch contributed to the relief of their suffering brethren in Judea; it was *according to each one's ability*. Personal convenience, or comfort, was not so much consulted, as the ability which God had given to relieve the necessities of others. A worthy example this, in respect to our charities and our contributions for the spread of the gospel. Thus, too, shall we be laying up in store a good foundation against the time of rendering our account. 1 Tim. 6: 17—19. Let us "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Phil. 2: 4. It is just, as well as pleasant, to record the fact, also, that Jews, living in foreign parts, were in the habit of sending relief, in times of distress, to destitute Jews in Jerusalem.

30. *They sent it to the elders.* The elders were probably the officers of the church, mentioned generally—those who had the management of affairs among the Christians in Jerusalem. The money, we may well believe, was sent to the particular care of such men as had been chosen, according to the sixth chapter of this book, for distributing money which was designed for the relief of the destitute.

whom an angel delivereth upon the prayers of the church. 20 In his pride taking to himself the honor due to God, he is stricken by an angel, and dieth miserably. 24 After his death, the word of God prospereth.

NOW about that time, Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.

CHAPTER XII.

The events related in this chapter occurred about eleven years from the time of our Lord's crucifixion, that is, about the year 44 of the Christian era.

1. *Herod the king.* The Herod here mentioned bears the name, in civil history, of Herod Agrippa the elder, or the first, there being another Herod who also bore the surname Agrippa, and who is mentioned in Acts 25: 13. The one here introduced was grandson of Herod the Great, who was king of the Jews at the time our Saviour was born. Matt. 2: 1. The dominions of Herod the Great were, after his death, divided among his three sons, Philip, Herod Antipas, and Archelaus; the two former receiving the northern and eastern parts of the country (Luke 3: 1), and the last having Samaria, Judea, and Idumea. Matt. 2: 22. After some changes in public affairs, the region which had been assigned to Philip, was given, by the Roman emperor Caligula, to Herod Agrippa the first, the one here mentioned: at a subsequent date, Caligula gave also to Herod Agrippa the territory which had been governed by Herod Antipas, the Herod mentioned in Luke 3: 1, 19. 9: 7. 13: 31. 23: 7. The succeeding Roman emperor, Claudius, also bestowed on Herod Agrippa, in the year 43, the districts which had been given to Archelaus, and which, after the banishment of Archelaus, had been governed by Roman procurators. Thus the Herod Agrippa here mentioned, came into possession of the whole country which had formerly been governed by Herod the Great, and was honored by the emperor with the title of *king of Judea*. || *To vex; to persecute.*

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Then were the

2. *He killed James the brother of John, &c.* Herod, as king of Judea, had the power of life and death over his subjects; and in an arbitrary way, he doomed the apostle James to death by the sword of the executioner. The apostle was doubtless beheaded. Herod would represent himself as actuated by zeal for the Jewish religion. He was very popular among the Jews, and affected extraordinary zeal in encouraging and maintaining their religious customs. He made Jerusalem his principal residence, and strictly observed the Jewish rites; so that, as Josephus remarks, he did not allow a day to pass without offering the appointed sacrifice. Notwithstanding Herod's apparent devotion to the Jewish *religion*, he was evidently more solicitous to please *the people*, than to please *God*. His love of popularity led him not only to disregard the claims of a true religion, but also to trifle with the dearest rights of those whose civil interests had been intrusted to him. James, the brother of John (Matt. 10: 2), was also called *the greater*, to distinguish him from James, the son of Alpheus (Matt. 10: 3), who was called *the less*. See Mark 15: 40.

3. *It pleased the Jews.* Both rulers and people, probably, expressed their pleasure at Herod's conduct. || *He proceeded to take Peter also.* Herod's aim was, to cut off the leaders of the Christian company, supposing that thus the Christian cause would come to nought. || *Days of unleavened bread;* that is, the festival of the Jewish passover (Luke 22: 1)—a religious festival among the Jews, of a week's continuance, occurring yearly, in the month which corresponded to our April, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day, during which no leavened bread was allowed to be used among them, in remembrance of their hasty departure out

days of unleavened bread.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending

of Egypt, when they had not time properly to prepare bread. See Ex. 12: 39. It was hence called *the feast, or festival, of unleavened bread*. It commemorated the nation's deliverance from servitude in Egypt, and the safety of their first-born, as the destroying angel *passed by* their houses (Ex. 12: 12, 13), while he smote with death the first-born of the Egyptians. Ex. 12: 29, 30. See Lev. 23: 5—8. Deut. 16: 1—8.

4. *Four quaternions of soldiers.* A quaternion is a detachment of four. Four soldiers at a time had charge of Peter, two of them being in the prison with him, and two standing sentry at the gate. Compare v. 6. There were four of these companies of guards, making sixteen soldiers in all. Each company served as a guard three hours, and was then relieved by another company. These soldiers were probably in Herod's special employ, not called into service by the Roman emperor's command; but the Roman practice of keeping guard was adopted by Herod, as, by his having been brought up at Rome, he had imbibed a partiality for Roman customs. || *Intending after Easter.* The word here translated *Easter* is the same as is elsewhere translated *the passover*. It seems surprising, at first sight, that this term should have been employed by our translators instead of the term *passover*. As, however, they belonged to the English Episcopal church, which observes the festival of Easter, and as that festival occurs in the same month as did the Jewish festival of the passover, they judged it a convenient term, as indicating the time of which the sacred historian is speaking. It was a term in familiar use among them and in their country, and it did not, probably, strike them, as it does us, as being quite an improper term to use in a

after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church

translation of the Bible, since it almost unavoidably makes the impression that the festival of Easter was observed in the age of the world when Peter lived. Lest, however, we should seem to charge on the translators a sectarian design, it is proper to state that they did not originate the use of the word *Easter* in this passage; they only retained it from preceding English translations, which they consulted in forming our present version. It is found in Tyndal's translation of the New Testament, which bears the date of 1526 — nearly a century before our present version was prepared. Tyndal is believed to have adopted it from the translation of Luther, the German reformer. And from the time of Tyndal to the date of our present version of the Scriptures (1611), the word *Easter* was uniformly employed in this place by persons who translated the New Testament, with the exception of the translation called the Geneva Bible, which bears the date of 1557. The Geneva Bible has the proper word, *passover*. It may be necessary to observe, further, that Easter is a festival observed by the English Episcopal church to commemorate the resurrection of Christ from the dead. As his resurrection occurred at the time of the passover, Easter, in modern times, corresponds, in point of time, with the passover among the Jews. — Herod intended to defer Peter's execution until after the passover; being unwilling, as he doubtless pretended, to interrupt the solemnities of a religious festival by a public execution. Such a mixture was there of ill-will against the cause of Christ, and readiness to put to death an unoffending man, with a professed conscientiousness in regard to religion! So, in John 18: 28, we learn that the Jewish high priest and

unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains;

other officers, when bent on obtaining the Saviour's crucifixion, shrunk from the thought of defiling themselves, during the passover-week, by entering into a heathen ruler's judgment-hall; yet, with unappeasable hatred, they pushed forward their purpose of destroying one in whom an unprejudiced mind could find no fault at all. John 19: 6. || *To bring him forth to the people*; to bring him out of prison for trial and execution before the people. Peter was probably to have been brought for trial before the sanhedrim, and many of the people would have been present.

5. *Prayer was made, &c.* To prayer, the people of God readily — as it were instinctively — resort in times of distress. The death of Peter would have been at any time a severe calamity to the church, but doubly so at this time, as one of the apostles, James, had so recently been put to death. The hazard to which the cause of Christ was exposed naturally prompted fervent and intense prayer. The members of the Christian body had also learned deeply to sympathize with one another in their sorrows. Compare Rom. 12: 4, 5. 1 Cor. 12: 26.

6. *Herod would have brought him forth*; was intending to bring him out of prison. The time was now just at hand when the king was about to carry his purpose into effect. He was waiting only for the next day to come. Compare vs. 18, 19. || *Bound with two chains*. Needless severity, as well as needless caution to prevent escape, appears to have been exercised towards Peter; for it was customary, at least among the Romans, to use but one chain in securing a prisoner thus confined. The right hand of the prisoner was chained to the left of a soldier. In Peter's case, his left hand also was chained to the right of another sol-

and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the

dier. Perhaps, however, this was the case only during the night. || *The keepers before the door, &c.*; the other two soldiers, who had charge of Peter, and who kept guard at the door.

7. *A light shined in the prison.* Perhaps the splendor is here referred to which is elsewhere spoken of as attending the presence of angels. Compare Luke 2: 9. || *And he smote Peter on the side;* and thus awaked him; for Peter was asleep. v. 6. The guards, too, had probably, by the special providence of God, fallen into a deep sleep, or were overpowered by astonishment at the sudden appearance of the angel. || *His chains fell off, &c.*; miraculously, by special divine power.

8. *Gird thyself.* The orientals used long, flowing garments, which required to be fastened to the body by a girdle when a person was walking. || *Bind on thy sandals.* The sandal, a covering for the sole of the foot, was bound on the foot with a strap. || *Cast thy garment about thee.* The garment here meant was the mantle—a large piece of cloth, nearly square, worn by wrapping it around the body, or fastening it about the shoulders.

9. *Wist not that it was true;* knew not that it was a reality. || *Thought he saw a vision;* thought that he

first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together, praying.

must be in a dream, or that the events now passing were only a vision presented to him during sleep. He was so surprised, that he scarcely knew, as we sometimes say, whether he was asleep or awake.

10. *The first and the second ward.* The word *ward* here means *guard*. Reference is had to the two soldiers who kept guard outside of the room in which Peter had been confined; one of them at the entrance of the room, and the other near the outside iron gate. || *Which opened to them of his own accord;* another striking evidence of supernatural agency. As if conscious of the presence of God, the iron gate threw itself open without being touched by the angel.

11. *When Peter was come to himself.* He had thus far been in a state of amazement, scarcely knowing whether what was taking place was a reality. v. 9. He was now recovered from his surprise, and intelligently reflected on the occurrences. This is the second time on record that Peter had been rescued from prison by an angel. See 5: 19.

12. *John, whose surname was Mark;* the author of one of the Gospels, and companion of Barnabas and Saul in a part of their preaching tour in Asia Minor. See v. 25, and 13: 5, 13. He

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knock-

is also affectionately mentioned in 1 Pet. 5: 13. We read in the fifth verse, that unceasing prayer was offered up for Peter by the church. From this twelfth verse it would seem that, during the night in which Peter was miraculously rescued, many members of the church were assembled for prayer at the house of Mark's mother. And how evidently were their prayers answered! As in the case of Daniel (Dan. 9: 21), while the disciples were "speaking in prayer," an angel was "caused to fly swiftly" for Peter's deliverance. Compare also the promise in Is. 65: 24. See, likewise, Matt. 7: 7. 21: 22. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5: 16.

13. *At the door of the gate.* The gates in the East were of large size, and the door was either one of the folds, or a smaller fixture, easily opened. *|| Came to hearken.* It was usual for persons who sought admittance, to make known who they were, as well as to knock.

14. *And when she knew Peter's voice.* She had often heard Peter speak, and now instantly recollected his voice. *|| She opened not the gate for gladness.* How true to nature was her conduct! She became so occupied with the fact that Peter was there, that she felt impelled forthwith to make it known, without waiting to let Peter in.

16. *Thou art mad;* beside thyself, out of thy senses. It is one of those common expressions which naturally occur when a person makes a declara-

ting. And when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17. But he beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

18. Now as soon as it was day,

tion that appears incredible. *|| It is his angel.* It was believed, among the Jews, that to each person, at his birth, there was assigned a guardian angel. And as angels, when they appeared to men, assumed the human form, so they supposed that each one's guardian angel could assume his form and imitate his voice. Unable to believe that it could be Peter himself who was at the gate, the thought that his angel had come to make known his situation, as soon to be put to death, may have entered their minds. It is also said to have been an opinion among the Jews, that, on the death of a person, his guardian angel sometimes appeared to his particular friends, in his exact form and with his voice. Hence the disciples may have thought that Peter had either died, or had been secretly put to death, in the prison. As, however, the disciples were more amazed than under the influence of sound judgment, it is useless to inquire particularly into the views which were implied in their supposing, that his angel had made an appearance.

17. *Show these things unto James;* that is, James the less. Mark 15: 40. The other James, brother of John (Matt. 10: 2), had recently been put to death by Herod. See v. 2 of this chapter. *|| And to the brethren.* In other houses besides this of Mary, the Christians were doubtless holding assemblies for prayer in behalf of Peter. The agreeable intelligence would soon be spread among the anxious followers of Christ. *|| He departed;* that is, from the city. But

there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from

to what place he went, we are not informed. It is supposed by some that he retired to Antioch in Syria, and that reference is made in Gal. 2: 11 to his temporary stay there, which commenced at this time.

18. *There was no small stir among the soldiers.* They were thrown into consternation and fear, because their lives were now in danger; such was the strictness of military law.

19. *Commanded that they should be put to death.* Peter's escape was imputed by Herod to the soldiers' fault. When guards were unfaithful to their trust, they exposed themselves to severe punishment, and generally to the same kind of punishment which was designed for the person who had escaped. Herod had sufficient cruelty, according to ancient testimony, to treat these soldiers with extreme rigor. As they could give no account of Peter's escape, nor offer any thing in justification of themselves, Herod might have supposed them to have been in some way accessory to the escape, and would not fail to take vengeance on them. Disappointment, too, at the escape of his victim, whom both he and the people had expected to be executed, and to be thus removed out of the way, would lend its aid in ordering for them the full penalty of the law. || *He went down from Judea to Cesarea.* See on 8: 40. Herod, like the Roman governors, though his principal residence was at Jerusalem, yet had also a palace at Cesarea. He spent his time in either city, as circumstances required.

20. *Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon;* with the people of Tyre and Sidon, the two commercial cities of Phenicia, in

Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode.

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. But they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished

the north-west part of Palestine. The ground of Herod's displeasure is nowhere mentioned. It is conjectured to have been the rivalry which would naturally arise between those cities, so much engaged in commerce, and the city of Cesarea, on which Herod the Great had bestowed so much labor in furnishing it with a convenient harbor, and endeavoring to secure for it commercial advantages and general opulence. || *They came with one accord to him.* As Cesarea, where Herod was residing, was in the vicinity of Phenicia, the opportunity was taken of sending ambassadors to him, in order to effect a settlement of the difficulties. The people came to him through their ambassadors. They came with one accord, inasmuch as the ambassadors of the Tyrians and those of the Sidonians came conjointly. || *The king's chamberlain;* the officer who had the care of the king's bed-chamber. The man who held this station had much influence with the king; and the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon took pains to secure his good-will, that through him they might more readily gain favor from the king. || *Desired peace;* reconciliation, a settlement of the difficulties. It is not likely that war had broken out between Herod and these cities, or that war was threatened; inasmuch as these cities were under the dominion of the Romans, to whom Herod and his territories were also subject. Some offence had been taken by Herod; and it was in his power to distress those cities, by various measures affecting their prosperity, since the country all around them was under his jurisdiction. || *Their country was nourished by the king's country.*

by the king's *country*.

21 And upon a set day, Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout,

Phenicia was a small country, depending wholly on navigation. For supplies of grain and other articles of daily consumption, the people depended on the country governed by king Herod. His ill-will, therefore, might lead him to divert the course of trade, or to enact prohibitions, so that the usual supplies from Galilee and other parts of Palestine, should be carried to other cities. It was of vital importance, then, for Tyre and Sidon to be on good terms with Herod.

21. *Upon a set day, Herod — sat upon his throne.* The set day, here mentioned, was probably the one on which the king designed to give a public reception to the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon. At the same time he was also celebrating games in honor of the Roman emperor. The theatre in Cesarea was, doubtless, the place in which the ambassadors were to be received, as well as the public celebration was to occur. The throne was an elevated seat in this theatre, favorable for displaying the magnificence of the king and addressing the people, as well as for witnessing the games. || *Made an oration unto them.* Herod's oration was addressed primarily, in all probability, to the ambassadors, though designed to produce effect on the assembled company.

22. *The people gave a shout.* Though the *people* are here mentioned, we can hardly suppose that any considerable number of *Jews* would unite in such idolatrous language as was used on this occasion. Cesarea, besides its Jewish inhabitants, had a very large Gentile population, from which many could be found, who, on the excitement of a public occasion, would indulge in the most extravagant adulation. Some of Herod's chief flatterers, scattered here and

saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory. And he was eaten of worms, and gave

there in the crowd, probably commenced the applause, and soon the company in general united in it. It was customary among the ancients to shout applause, and in various ways to incite their orators in the act of speaking. || *It is the voice of a god, &c.* Kings and emperors, in that age of the world, were often after their decease, and sometimes even during their lifetime, honored with the title of *gods*. Frail, mortal men thus willingly took to themselves a name, at least, which little suits the condition of humanity, however dignified. The flattery was highly acceptable to Herod, on his throne, in presence of a vast assembly, and of ambassadors, who had come to him, as a distinguished ruler, with the special purpose of moderating at least, if not of removing, his displeasure with the cities they represented.

23. *The angel of the Lord smote him;* smote him with a fatal disease. The disease which speedily terminated his days, was brought on him, as a divine judgment, by the invisible agency of an angel. || *He gave not God the glory.* He took honor to himself, as if he was superior to man. || *He was eaten of worms.* He was suddenly struck, by the special visitation of God, with a disease in his bowels, and was reduced to the miserable condition mentioned by the sacred writer. So passes away worldly glory ! What a transition ! From a throne, and from splendid apparel, dazzling the eyes of beholders, to a sick-bed and a loathsome disease, to be a prey of worms even before the spirit had departed ! "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased." Matt. 23 : 12. "Those that walk in pride God is able to abase." Dan. 4 : 37. "Never," says Doddridge, "is a mortal nearer to destruction, than when he forgets he is a mortal."

up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew

It may not be improper here to present the account which the Jewish historian, Josephus, has given of Herod's public display, and of his sickness and death. It must be remembered, however, that Josephus wrote merely as a civil historian, and withal, indulging somewhat in the superstitions which were prevalent in his day. We could hardly expect him to recognize the agency of an angel in inflicting the disease; nor to connect, so intimately as Luke does, this event with the impious reception that Herod gave to the flattery which was expressed. Luke's account is that of a sacred writer; and he traces the event to the real cause. Josephus takes an external view of the matter, speaking more of second causes. Besides, he might wish to omit some things out of respect to the memory of Herod. "When Agrippa [the same as Luke calls Herod] had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Cesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Cesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows, he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of texture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time, the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him. And presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, though not for his good, that 'he was a god'; and they added, 'Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall

and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul

we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.' Upon this, the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope, over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings, to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his intestines, and began in a most violent manner. He, therefore, looked upon his friends, and said, 'I whom you call *a god*, am commanded presently to depart this life; while providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called *immortal*, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.' When he had said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly, he was carried into the palace, and the rumor went abroad every where that he would certainly die in a little time. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his intestines for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and in the seventh year of his reign." Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, book xix. 8. 2.

24. *But the word of God grew and multiplied;* the gospel went on spreading more and more widely:—a remark of great interest in this connection. The king of the country had recently put James, the apostle, to death, and came very near taking Peter's life. He was probably bent on despatching all the leaders of the Christians. But he was signally disappointed. Divine providence specially interposed, and defeated his destructive projects. In the midst of a magnificent display, and of the flattering shouts of a multitude devoted to his interests, he became a miserable victim of disease, loathsome

returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

CHAPTER XIII.

1 Paul and Barnabas are chosen to go to the Gentiles. 7 Of Sergius Paulus, and Ely-

to himself and all around him, and in a few days expired. The cause of Christ, however, which he sought to crush, went on triumphantly, extending on every side. Well may we say, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Ps. 2: 1—4. "The wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. God shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth." Ps. 76: 10, 12. How remarkably Gamaliel's counsel, as recorded in Acts 5: 38, 39, was proved to be the dictate of wisdom!

25. *Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem.* They returned to Antioch, whence they had been sent to Jerusalem with the contribution for the relief of the suffering Christians there. See 11: 29, 30. || *Fulfilled their ministry;* having performed the service for which they had been appointed, namely, the conveying of the contribution to Jerusalem. || *John, &c.* See on v. 12.

CHAPTER XIII.

This chapter opens to us a more extended field of apostolical labor in the spread of the gospel. The preceding chapters have mostly had respect to the progress of the Christian cause in Jerusalem and Palestine, and to the Christian laborers in general. A passing notice occurs in these chapters of the gospel's being carried to Jews beyond the bounds of Palestine, in consequence of the persecution which arose after the martyrdom of Stephen. 8: 1. 11: 19—21. We have also seen, in the tenth chapter, how the apostles and other Christian Jews were led to

mas the sorcerer. 14 Paul preacheth at Antioch that Jesus is Christ. 42 The Gentiles believe: 45 but the Jews gainsay and blaspheme; 46 whereupon they turn to the Gentiles. 48 As many as were ordained to life believed.

NOW there were in the church

that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barna-

admit the truth that the gospel was to be addressed to the Gentiles. We have also been informed of the planting of the gospel in the city of Antioch in Syria, and of the year's labor there bestowed by Barnabas and Saul. See 11: 19, 20, 26. A new scene now opens before us. The gospel is conveyed, far and wide, both to Gentiles and to Jews. While the field, however, is enlarged, the sacred writer confines his attention, in the following chapters of this book, almost exclusively to the labors of Paul and his travelling companions.

Some of the Christians who left Jerusalem after the death of Stephen, went to Antioch, and communicated the gospel to the Jews there residing. 11: 19. Subsequently, and, in all probability, after the baptism of Cornelius, and the disclosure of God's will that the gospel should be preached to Gentiles as well as to Jews, others went to Antioch, and, without restriction, preached to Greeks as well as to Jews. 11: 20. A signal blessing accompanied these endeavors to introduce the gospel. Barnabas was afterwards sent thither by the church in Jerusalem. 11: 22. So greatly were his labors blessed to the conversion of Gentiles, doubtless, as well as of Jews, that he needed assistance; and he accordingly associated Saul with him in his labors at Antioch. 11: 23, 26. As the church in Jerusalem had been a radiating point, whence the gospel had diffused its light, so the church in Antioch now became honored in a similar manner, as the spot whence a Christian mission proceeded. The manner in which this missionary enterprise was originated and conducted, and the happy results of it, are detailed in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters.

bas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost

1. *Certain prophets and teachers.*

Some of these were, no doubt, inhabitants of Antioch; some, as Barnabas and Saul, only occasional residents. The precise distinction between these two classes of ministers is not obvious; and probably, in this passage, a precise distinction was not meant to be observed. The *prophets*, among the early Christians, appear, in general, to have been those who occasionally foretold future events under divine inspiration, and who, in their religious instructions and exhortations, were under a peculiar divine influence. See on 11: 27. The *teachers* were probably, when spoken of distinctively, those not endued with a spirit of prophecy, but who were able to instruct in religion, to unfold and vindicate the principles of the Christian dispensation. The words seem, however, to be here used in a general sense, as meaning *preachers of the gospel.* || *Simeon, that was called Niger.* Of this man we find no mention elsewhere. The name *Niger* is of Roman origin, signifying *black*, and was probably added to his original name by some Roman acquaintance. || *Lucius of Cyrene*; the same man, probably, as is mentioned in Rom. 16: 21. *Cyrene*. See on 11: 20. || *Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.* It was not unusual, in ancient times, for lads to be selected from other families to become fellow-pupils and playmates with the sons of kings and distinguished men. Such a circumstance was of course an honor that would naturally be mentioned, in after life, by an individual speaking or writing of men who in their boyhood had been thus temporarily associated with a distinguished family. The Herod here spoken of was not the one mentioned in the preceding chapter, and

said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they being sent forth by

who bore the title of *king*. It was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, and uncle of the Herod who perished so miserably at Cesarea. He is the one whose name occurs in various passages of Luke's Gospel. See Luke 3: 1, 19. 9: 7. 13: 31. 23: 7.

2. *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted;* as they were engaged in religious services, particularly prayer. The mention of *fasting*, in this connection, seems to intimate that the occasion was one of peculiar solemnity, probably having reference to some anticipated efforts for spreading the gospel. The preachers then at Antioch would naturally wish to extend the gospel to neighboring regions. Their minds being deeply intent on this object, they sought divine guidance by prayer and fasting, with peculiar devotion and fervency.

|| *The Holy Ghost said;* not with an audible voice, but by suggesting to their minds the will of God in some way that could not be misunderstood, nor doubted. Probably, as some of these persons are called *prophets*, the Holy Spirit communicated his will to one of them, who made it known to the rest. || *Separate me, &c.*; set apart for my service Barnabas and Saul. The Holy Spirit specially designated the persons who were to be sent forth. || *For the work, &c.*; that is, as appears by the result, for the work of spreading the gospel throughout Asia Minor.

3. *Laid their hands on them.* The laying on of hands by the prophets and teachers, seems here to have been merely a token of the persons' being designated to the particular service on which they were going, and an expression of desire for a blessing on their labors. It was not their first introduction to the public duties of

the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone

through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus;

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

the ministry; nor was it, in this instance, the medium of bestowing the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. These gifts were already possessed. It was rather a fraternal token of appointment, in connection with prayer, and of the union of heart which all felt in this undertaking. — How worthy of imitation is this primitive model of missionary undertaking, and of other enterprises for promoting the cause of Christ! They should be entered on with a spirit of fervent prayer, and with the cordial coöperation of the Lord's laborers. We may, then, confidently believe that our undertakings are from God, and will be greatly blessed by him.

4. *Seleucia*; a seaport, about fifteen miles from Antioch, on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, at the mouth of the river Orontes. It received its name from Seleucus Nicanor, who was one of the generals of Alexander the Great. After the death of Alexander, he acquired great power, and became king of Syria. || *Cyprus*; a large island in the Mediterranean sea, a short distance south-west from Seleucia. See on 11: 19. From 4: 36, we learn that Barnabas was a native, or a resident, of Cyprus; and he was probably led to go to that island on account of his acquaintance with the country, and his particular interest in its spiritual welfare.

5. *Salamis*; the chief city of Cyprus, in the south-eastern part of the island. || *They had also John to their minister*; John, who was sur-named Mark. Compare 12: 25. He was their attendant and assistant, particularly in performing various minor services for them.

6. *When they had gone through the*

isle unto Paphos. Cyprus lies in a direction nearly from east to west. Barnabas and Saul landed at Salamis, in the eastern part of the island, and afterwards travelled through the island, in a western direction, till they came to Paphos, a maritime city on its western coast. || *A certain sorcerer, a false prophet*; one who practised magic, professing to have supernatural skill and aid in telling fortunes and predicting future events; somewhat such a man as was Simon the sorcerer, of whom we read in 8: 9, &c. || *Bar-jesus*. The word *Bar*, in its original language, signified *son*. Bar-jesus was the same as *son of Jesus*, or of *Joshua*.

7. *The deputy of the country*. Sergius Paulus was the proconsul of Cyprus, appointed by the Roman senate to take charge of the island, as its governor. || *A prudent man*; an intelligent man. He had, doubtless, been well educated, and felt but little, if any, respect for the idolatrous religion of the Roman people. He saw the superiority of some of the religious views which Bar-jesus maintained, and, as the sorcerer was a shrewd man, of considerable knowledge, both of religious and other subjects, Sergius Paulus favored him, and kept him in his company. || *Who called for Barnabas and Saul*. Hearing that these men were on the island, as religious teachers, and being favorably impressed with the information he had received concerning them, and disposed, withal, to inquire on religious subjects, he invited them to his residence for the express purpose of learning their views.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all sub-

8. *Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name), &c.* The word *Elymas* is properly an Arabic word, expressed in Greek as nearly as the language would allow. *Elymas*, in Arabic, corresponds to *Magus*, in Greek, which latter term is here translated *sorcerer*. It means *learned*, or *wise*, or *magician*, and was, perhaps, proudly adopted by this man as a proper name, or title, by which he chose to be called. He had, probably, lived in Arabia, and acquired some skill in natural philosophy, and was able to impose on the credulous as a man possessing supernatural powers. || *Seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.* Sergius Paulus was favorably inclined to Barnabas and Saul; and the sorcerer began, of course, to fear that he should lose the proconsul's favor. Hence he opposed the new teachers, and sought to prevent Sergius Paulus from embracing the doctrine of Christ.

9. *Then Saul (who also is called Paul).* Henceforward, in this book, the name *Paul* is given to this apostle; while in all the preceding chapters where he is spoken of, he is invariably called *Saul*. Why he changed his name we have not the means of determining with certainty. Some have supposed that he always had the two names *Saul* and *Paul*; but if so, an intimation of this would doubtless have sooner occurred, and the name *Saul* would not from this point be regularly disused. Others have supposed that he was led to change his name out of respect to Sergius Paulus; but this is, certainly, an insufficient reason. And yet the conversion of Sergius Paulus may have been the occasion of his chang-

tilty, and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun

ing his name. It is more likely that, as he was henceforth to be mainly occupied in planting the gospel among the Greeks and Romans, he preferred a name which was frequent among them; whereas *Saul* would be an unaccustomed sound to Roman ears. It was not unusual to make changes in names for causes not always very important. Besides, as he was a Roman citizen, there was a special propriety in his adopting a Roman name, when he was expecting to be almost exclusively occupied among Gentiles who were in subjection to the Roman power. || *Filled with the Holy Ghost;* under special divine influence. It was the more important for the sacred historian to notice this, since the terms in which Paul addressed the sorcerer, though faithfully appropriate to the man's real character, had an appearance of severity, and might by some be regarded as expressions of spleen or anger. The circumstances required Paul to take a very decided position, and fully to unmask the deceiver.

10. *Full of all subtlety, and all mischief;* full of deceit and craftiness. || *Child of the devil;* like the devil, as to temper of mind; an opposer of the truth. So our Lord, in John 8: 44, spoke of the Jews who perverted and opposed his doctrine, as being children of the devil, on account of their resembling him in their opposition to the truth. || *To pervert the right ways of the Lord;* to pervert the Lord's truth; to make such distorted representations of it as to turn away honest and simple-minded inquirers.

11. *The hand of the Lord is upon thee;* God is about to inflict signal

for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they

punishment on thee. Compare Ex. 9:3. || *Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.* The blindness which was to be sent on Bar-jesus, was to be total; but the hope of sight's being restored was not wholly taken away. || *Immediately there fell on him, &c.* He began, at once, to lose his eyesight; a dimness of vision fell on him, and he soon found himself in utter darkness.

12. *Astonished at the doctrine of the Lord;* struck with the miraculous evidence, that the teaching of Paul and Barnabas was the truth of God.

13. *Paul and his company.* Paul and his companions, Barnabas and John Mark. Perhaps others, too, had joined the apostle. || *Loosed from Paphos;* set sail from Paphos. || *Perga in Pamphylia.* Pamphylia was one of the provinces of Asia Minor, on the coast of the Mediterranean sea, north-west of Cyprus. Perga was the metropolis of the province, not far from the sea-coast. || *John departing from them.* The departure of John was not agreeable to Paul. The manner of speaking, in 15:38, shows that the apostle considered him censurable — perhaps for instability, or for indisposition to encounter the trials incident to the missionary tour. Paul's confidence was, however, afterwards restored to him, so that he affectionately commended him to the Colossian believers (Col. 4:10), and in the Epistle to Philemon (v. 24), named him among his fellow-laborers; and in the second Epistle to Timothy (4:11), expressed a desire for his company, as of one particularly useful to him in his offi-

came to Perga in Pamphylia: And John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers

cial labors. See, also, on 15:38. || *Returned to Jerusalem.* Jerusalem was probably his place of residence; as his mother, according to 12:12, had her home there.

14. *Antioch in Pisidia.* Pisidia was another province of Asia Minor, just above Pamphylia. Antioch was a city on the confines of Pisidia and of Phrygia, the next province in order on the north. Though it was really situated in Phrygia, yet it was considered as belonging to Pisidia, and was called *Antioch in Pisidia.* By this addition, it is at once distinguished from Antioch in Syria, whence the apostle started on this tour. || *And went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.* Large numbers of Jews were scattered throughout Asia Minor, and especially in the chief cities. They always, if possible, secured to themselves the convenience of a synagogue for worship — a circumstance peculiarly favorable to the apostles in spreading the gospel, as they were sure to find an audience on the Jewish sabbath, and, from the customs of the Jews, would be favored with an opportunity to address the assembly. The *sabbath day* here mentioned was that which the Jews observed, corresponding to our Saturday. The apostles would, of course, avail themselves of an opportunity for preaching on any day. || *And sat down;* probably, as it is thought, on the seats designed for those who gave public instruction; thus indicating that, if permitted, they were willing to address the people.

15. *After the reading of the law and the prophets.* The reading of select

of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.*

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear

passages from the law of Moses, and from the prophetic books of the Old Testament, was a part of the regular exercises in the synagogue worship. The law of Moses, that is, the Pentateuch, was divided into sections of such length as to be read wholly through every year. After the Scriptures were read, an explanation of the passage, or some other address, was given, either by the person who had read (compare Luke 4: 17, &c.), or some other suitable person. || *The rulers of the synagogue.* Several men of note were intrusted with the care of the synagogues, particularly as to providing for the due performance of the worship. They selected the readers, and appointed persons to explain the Scriptures and address the people. Of these, one was considered as the chief ruler of the synagogue. Compare Luke 13: 14. || *Sent unto them;* sent word to them, doubtless, by the servant of the synagogue. Compare Luke 4: 20.

16. *Then Paul—said.* In the address which Paul delivered on this occasion, he briefly recounted the history of the Jewish nation to the time of David. At this point, he reminded his hearers of the promise that a deliverer, or Saviour, the Messiah, should be raised up from the family of David. He announced that Jesus was this Saviour. The testimony of John the Baptist is produced, as showing Jesus to be the expected Messiah; the fulfilment of the ancient Scriptures in the crucifixion of Jesus, and in his resurrection from the dead, is also mentioned as proof of the same point. The apostle then earnestly exhorted his hearers to embrace the truth respecting Jesus, and receive the spiritual blessings which could be obtained in no other way

God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it.

than through Jesus, and which would be given to *every one* that should believe in him. || *Men of Israel, and ye that fear God.* There were two classes of hearers in the synagogue—native Israelites, or Jews, and proselytes from among the Gentiles. The proselytes are meant by the appellation, *ye that fear God.* Of proselytes in general, there were also two sorts; the first, of persons who received the whole of the Mosaic law, and submitted to circumcision, and were therefore included among Jews as being children of Abraham; the second, and by far the more numerous sort, of persons who had renounced idolatry and admitted the chief points in the Jewish religion, but who did not submit to circumcision. These, though regarded as proselytes, and admitted to many privileges among the Jews, were not considered as Jews. They were proselytes only in part. It is probably this latter sort which is here meant by those *who fear God.*

17. *Chose our fathers;* selected our forefathers, the patriarchs, as objects of divine favor, calling them out from the nations and from their own kindred. The apostle referred to God's calling of Abraham (Gen. 12: 1), and keeping his posterity, through Isaac, distinct from all other people. || *Exalted the people;* bestowed distinguished favor on them. The remarkable increase of the Hebrews in Egypt, and the favor which for a time they enjoyed in consideration of Joseph's services to the country of Egypt, seem to be particularly intended. See Ex. 1: 7. || *With a high arm;* with a signal display of his mighty power. See Ex. 3: 20. 14: 30, 31. The book of Exodus (chapters 7—15) in relating the events

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed

connected with Israel's deliverance from Egypt, shows the power of God in this deliverance.

18. *About the time of forty years.* Forty years elapsed after the Hebrews left Egypt before they entered the promised land. So long a continuance in the Arabian desert was a judgment on the people for their rebellious conduct. In the thirteenth chapter of Numbers, we are informed that the people had arrived sufficiently near the land to send spies into it. These spies, with the exception of two, Caleb and Joshua, brought back an unfavorable report, and greatly discouraged the people, thus hindering them from going at once into Canaan, with reliance on God for success. As a judgment on the people for their distrust of God, all who had left Egypt, that were over twenty years of age, were doomed to die in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua; while the younger portion, together with their children, were, after forty years, to enter the promised land. See Num. 13. 14:28—33. Josh. 5:6. || *Suffered he their manners;* he endured, or bore with, their conduct. The apostle generally used as mild language as the case would allow. For though God endured the rebellious conduct of the Hebrews in the desert, without being provoked to cut off the nation, yet the psalmist (Ps. 95:10) represents him as being deeply grieved with them. It is proper here to mention, that some critical editions of the Greek Testament have in this place a word slightly different in sound from the ordinary editions, and one which is generally regarded as more correct. The meaning of that word is, *carried, sustained them, as a nurse;* that is, *carefully cherished them.* It probably contained an allusion to Deut. 1:31, in which verse Moses reminded the Hebrew people of God's care in the following manner: "Thou hast seen how that

seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that, he gave unto

the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place." The apostle wished to affect his hearers' minds with a sense of God's condescension to the Hebrew nation. The divine care which had been exercised over them, like that of a father carrying an infant son over a rough, or dangerous, place, and the forbearance which had so often declined to inflict deserved vengeance, could scarcely be contemplated without some emotions of gratitude, and of desire to obey his commands.

19. *When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan;* the Hittites and the Gergashites, the Amorites and the Canaanites, the Perizzites and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. See Deut. 7:1. Josh. 3:10. || *He divided their land, &c.* The division of the land among the tribes of Israel, was performed by Joshua, under the Lord's direction. See Josh. 11:23. 12:6—8. 23:4.

20. *He gave unto them judges.* From the death of Joshua, who was acknowledged the chief human ruler of the people after Moses' death, to the time of king Saul, those who exercised the chief authority among the Hebrews were called *judges.* They were not hereditary rulers, nor does there appear to have been any uniform way of appointing them. The providence of God, in various ways, devolved on them the conduct of public affairs. || *About the space of four hundred and fifty years.* In the time of the apostles, it was customary to compute the interval during which the judges ruled, namely, from the death of Joshua to the time of Saul, as four hundred and fifty years. The historian Josephus followed the same computation; for he reckons five hundred and ninety-two years from the departure out of Egypt to the building of Solomon's temple. And if from this sum we subtract forty years spent

them judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them

in the wilderness, seventeen which are uniformly computed for the administration of Joshua, forty for the reign of Saul, forty for David's reign, and four for Solomon's up to the time of his building the temple (1 Kings 6:1), we shall have remaining four hundred and fifty-one, the period to be assigned to the administration of affairs by the judges.

It is necessary to mention, however, that this computation, which was the usual one among the Jews in the apostle's time, differs from that which appears to have prevailed at an earlier date. For, in 1 Kings 6:1, we are informed that from the departure out of Egypt to the building of Solomon's temple, there were only four hundred and eighty years. Thus there is a difference of one hundred and twelve years between the dates which Paul followed, and those which appear to have been used at an earlier period. Such differences as these, however, in dates, are not of material importance. The letters which were employed in ancient manuscripts for numbers may, in some instances, have been wrongly copied, or incorrectly deciphered; and as the attention of readers was not particularly directed to the subject of chronology, the means of correcting a copyist's misstatement, should one occur, would be likely to perish. These remarks are made on the supposition that the date in 1 Kings 6:1 may now be different from what it was originally. It ought, however, to be considered that the chronological statements of Josephus, which were, doubtless, the current ones among the Jews of his times, may have arisen from some mode of calculation different from that on which the statement in the book of Kings is founded; and having become once established, and generally acknowledged, and capable, no doubt, if we were ac-

Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David

quainted with all the circumstances which the writer had in view, of being harmonized with the statement in the Old Testament, the apostle would naturally mention the commonly received date, without attempting to settle a question of mere chronology. To settle such a question was no part of his business; and as the statement is merely an incidental one, not at all affecting his argument, the subject is of small practical importance. || *Until Samuel the prophet.* It was during Samuel's administration, who was both a prophet and a judge, that a change of government was introduced, and the regal form established. Compare 1 Sam. 3:20. 7:15—17.

21. *Afterward they desired a king.* They wished to have a government like that of the nations around them. See 1 Sam. 8:5, 7, 22. || *Saul, the son of Cis.* Cis is the same as Kish in the Old Testament. 1 Sam. 9:1, 2. The manner of Saul's selection to be king, and the events connected with his entering on the office, are related in 1 Sam. 9th and 10th chapters. || *By the space of forty years.* We have no information, in the Old Testament, as to the length of time that Saul reigned. Some authentic records, however, and common tradition, could hardly fail to preserve from oblivion a notice of this nature.

22. *And when he had removed him;* from his office and from life. The language, too, would remind a Jewish hearer, that God had virtually deposed Saul from his regal station some time before his death. God had informed Samuel, and Samuel had notified Saul, that the government was to be transferred to a person of another family. Saul was rejected on account of his disobedience to divine directions. See 1 Sam. 15:23, 26, 28. 16:1. || *He raised up unto them David to be their*

to be their king: to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised

king. See 1 Sam. 16: 1, 12, 13. 2 Sam. 2: 4. 5: 1—5. || *To whom also he gave testimony;* in respect to whom, as the man of his choice, he used language of commendation; namely, that which immediately follows. || *I have found David, &c.* The declaration here made respecting David, is a combination of certain passages in the Old Testament, or, rather, a comprehensive expression of the ideas conveyed in some passages. In Ps. 89: 20, the words occur—“I have found David my servant.” The remaining part of the declaration seems to have been drawn from 1 Sam. 13: 14, where Samuel said, in respect to David, “The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart;” and where, in contrast with what David would do, Saul is said not to have kept that which the Lord commanded him. David, on the contrary, would perform the Lord's will. Thus the *idea*, expressed in Scripture respecting David, is here presented by the apostle, rather than any one *verbal declaration*. This language concerning David was not designed to represent him as having in no instance displeased God. It has reference to his public character as a king,—that is, to his administration of the government as the Lord's servant,—rather than to his private character as a pious man. As a king, his administration was conducted, generally, so as to please God; while, on the contrary, Saul's administration was marked by violations of God's will. But notwithstanding the general and great excellence of David, both as a king and as a man, yet in both these respects he gave evidence of human frailty. In 2 Sam. 24: 10, we read his humble confession of an act of government deeply displeasing to God, and per-

unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 When John had first preached, before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Who think ye that

formed against the earnest advice of his chief officers (2 Sam. 24: 3, 4), the guilt of which consisted, perhaps, in an ambitious design to enlarge and establish his military power. And in the 51st psalm, we have his heartfelt confession of guilt in respect to Uriah and Bathsheba. 2 Sam. 12: 7—10.

23. *According to his promise.* The Messiah was, by divine promise, to descend from David. See Matt. 22: 42. John 7: 42. Acts 2: 30. Compare Ps. 89: 29, 36. 2 Sam. 7: 16. || *Raised unto Israel a Saviour.* Jesus came as a Saviour, not merely for Israel,—that is, for the Jews,—but for Gentiles also. But the promise of his coming had been made to the Jews; and it was from a Jewish family that he was to be born. It was to the Jews *first* that he was to present himself, and through them he was to be made known to other nations. As Paul was now addressing an assembly of Jews, there was no occasion for him to mention the purpose of God in behalf of the Gentiles.

24. *When John had first preached, before his coming.* John the Baptist was the Messiah's forerunner, to prepare the people, by his preaching, for the Messiah's approach. See Matt. 3: 1, 2, 11. John 1: 23, 26, 27. || *The baptism of repentance.* The baptism administered by John implied a profession of repentance, and of obligation, on the part of those who were baptized, to a life of righteousness, in expectation of the Messiah, whose followers they avowed themselves ready to become. Matt. 3: 2, 5, 6, 11.

25. *As John fulfilled his course;* as John was fulfilling his ministry, or course of service. Allusion is had, not to the termination of his course,

I am? I am not *he*. But behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this

but to its progress; as if the sacred writer had said, While John was fulfilling his ministry. || *He said, &c.* Compare Mark 1:7. Luke 3:16. John 1:20, 26, 27. || *I am not he*; I am not the Messiah, he whom you may suppose I claim to be (John 1:25), and whom you have been so long expecting. || *Whose shoes—I am not worthy to loose*. Sandals were worn in the East, bound around the foot. As they were not worn in the house, it was the office of a servant to unbind and remove them from a visiter's feet. The purport of John's language, then, was—I am not worthy to be the Messiah's servant, so greatly my superior is he. By thus referring to John the Baptist, the apostle, tacitly at least, showed that that class of prophecies had been fulfilled which related to the Messiah's harbinger; such as we find in Is. 40:3. Mal. 4:5.

26. *Children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God.* Allusion is here made to the two classes of hearers, the native Jews and the proselytes. See on v. 16. || *The word of this salvation*; the doctrine of the salvation through the Messiah. A similar form of expression occurs in 5:20. Jesus had just been spoken of (v. 23) as a Saviour, a Deliverer. This was one of the capacities in which the Messiah was to act, as delivering his followers from their sins. See Matt. 1:21.

27. *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, &c.* The apostle, having taught that through Jesus salvation was to be obtained, now proceeds to show that Jesus was really the Messiah. He is proved to be this long-expected personage, by the fact that the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in him. The doctrine now pro-

salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning him.

claimed by the apostle was, he declares, really the doctrine of salvation; for in the conduct of the people of Jerusalem and of the Jewish rulers, the Scriptures which foretold the Messiah received their accomplishment. || *Their rulers*; the members of the sanhedrim, before which court the pretended trial of Jesus took place. || *They knew him not*; they did not know that he was the Messiah. Thus, too, in 3:17, the apostle Peter speaks of the ignorance of the people respecting the true character of Jesus, as having contributed to the wicked deed of his crucifixion. Compare, too, 1 Cor. 2:8. The Jews had indeed all necessary evidence of his being the Messiah; but they were so blinded by prejudice and passion, and their expectations as to the character of the Messiah, and the conduct he would pursue, were so different from the character and conduct of Jesus, that they could not bring themselves to admit the evidences which he was constantly presenting, miraculous and striking though they were. || *The voices of the prophets*; the declarations of the prophets in the Old Testament. These were not properly understood by the Jews in the time of Christ. From their overlooking some of the prophecies, misunderstanding others, and directing their attention almost exclusively to one class of the prophecies, they failed to discover the real character of the expected Messiah, and the object which he was to accomplish. || *Which are read every sabbath day*; read in the synagogues during the public worship on the sabbath. Though the books of the prophets were read, yet their meaning was not apprehended. || *They have fulfilled them in condemning him*. By their voluntary rejec-

28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you

tion of Jesus, and by their procuring his condemnation and death, they brought about the very things which their prophets had predicted. Thus they unconsciously fulfilled their own Scriptures. Compare 2: 23. 3: 18. See Ps. 22: 16—18. Is. 53: 3, 7—9. Dan. 9: 26.

28. *Though they found no cause of death in him, &c.* The innocence of Jesus was repeatedly declared during his trial. The Jewish high priest and other chief men felt that they must resort to artifice, to false witness, and to various violent methods, in order to procure his death. See Luke 19: 47, 48. 23: 22. Mark 14: 1. John 11: 47—50. 18: 40. 19: 6.

29. *Fulfilled all that was written of him.* Compare Luke 22: 37. John 19: 28, 30, 36, 37. || *They took him down.* The word *they* does not here relate to the same persons as were engaged in condemning and crucifying him. It is here used, as is frequently the case, in a general sense; as if the writer had said, He was taken down. || *From the tree;* from the cross. See on 5: 30.

31. *And he was seen many days.* Forty days elapsed before Jesus ascended to heaven. See 1: 3. || *Of them which came up with him, &c.* Jesus did not show himself after his resurrection to the people generally, but only to his followers; and these were to bear public testimony to the fact of his resurrection. See 10: 40, 41.

glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in

32. *How that the promise which was made unto the fathers;* that is, the promise of the Messiah to come.

33. *In that he hath raised up Jesus again.* The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a signal fulfilment of the promises respecting the Messiah, since his resurrection was a striking era in the establishment of his spiritual kingdom. All the preliminaries to his being received at the right hand of God (Mark 16: 19), as head over all things (Eph. 1: 22), and Lord of all (Acts 10: 36), had been then passed through. His meritorious obedience and his humiliation were ended, and now by his resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God with power. Rom. 1: 4. Jesus also himself spoke of his resurrection as a principal evidence of his being the Messiah. See Matt. 12: 39, 40. 16: 21. || *In the second psalm.* See Ps. 2: 7.

34. *Now no more to return to corruption.* The resurrection of Jesus was distinguished from all instances, which had before taken place, of deceased persons being recalled to life, in that he was henceforward beyond the power of death. Lazarus and others who had been raised up from the dead, died again, and returned to corruption. Not so with Jesus. || *On this wise;* in this manner. || *I will give you the sure mercies of David;* I will give you the mercies promised to David—mercies which shall surely be bestowed. The

another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

apostle here quoted from Is. 55: 3, where God, through the prophet, bids the people yield themselves obediently to him, and assures them that thus they shall receive the blessings which had been promised to David — blessings which would without failure be bestowed. The chief point in these promises, was the coming of the Saviour through David's posterity ; and this Saviour, who was to be the spiritual king of the Lord's people, was to have an uninterrupted dominion. Compare Luke 1: 33. In order that this dominion should be an unbroken, uninterrupted one, it was necessary that when Jesus was raised up from the dead, his resurrection should be an entire and final triumph over death. Death must no more have power over him. From the language of Isaiah, then, it was evident that the Messiah was to triumph over the power of death. In accordance with this, Jesus, being raised up from the dead, ascended to heaven, entirely and forever beyond the reach of death.

35. *In another psalm.* See Ps. 16: 10. The apostle Paul here makes the same use of this passage as Peter had on the day of Pentecost (compare Acts 2: 27, 31), applying it to the Messiah, and affirming that its fulfilment in Jesus, who had not been permitted to undergo corruption, proved him to be the Messiah.

36. *For David — fell on sleep.* The passage just quoted from the sixteenth psalm, the apostle declares (as Peter also had on the day of Pentecost — Acts 2: 29—31), was not fulfilled in David ; for David fell asleep in death, and underwent corruption. || *Was laid unto his fathers.* This form of expression appears to have arisen from the practice of the Hebrews in burying the dead. Their sepulchres were large caves, either natural or artificial, with spacious apartments. When a

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

person died, and his body was laid in one of these receptacles of the dead, in which the corpses of his deceased kindred had before been deposited, he was said to be gathered unto his fathers, or ancestors. See Gen. 25: 8. The expression was familiarly used to convey the thought of dying and being buried, with the additional thought, in many instances, of the departed soul going to join the souls of deceased ancestors in the invisible world. See Gen. 49: 29. Judges 2: 10.

37. *He whom God raised again ;* namely, Jesus. || *Saw no corruption ;* did not experience the dissolution and corruption which dead bodies generally undergo. Compare 2: 31, 34.

The apostle had now presented appropriate evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. The evidence may be thus summarily stated: John the Baptist had borne testimony to him, as the Messiah ; the scriptures of the prophets had been fulfilled in his being condemned to a violent death ; and he had been raised up from the dead, no more to die, as the scriptures had foretold respecting the Messiah. The apostle proceeded at once to show the rich blessings which might be obtained from the Lord Jesus, and to warn his hearers of the dangers they would incur, should they not submit themselves to Jesus as the promised Messiah.

38. *The forgiveness of sins.* Forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ is here put for all the spiritual blessings granted to his followers ; this being of indispensable importance, and the first in the series of benefits which he bestows. The apostle Peter, in like manner, urged the Jews to become disciples of Jesus, that they might receive remission of sins. See 2: 38. 3: 19.

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

. 40 Beware therefore, lest that

39. *All that believe are justified from all things*; are absolved, or cleared from all charges of guilt, so that their transgressions shall not hereafter be laid to their account. In other words, they that believe in Jesus receive a full pardon of all their sins, and are admitted into the favor of God. || *From which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*. The law of Moses did not provide forgiveness for all sorts of offences—for sins of the heart as well as of the life, for offences wholly against God as well as those against the state. Nor was it designed as a simply spiritual system for the future salvation of the soul. It was of a mixed character, partly spiritual and partly civil. It had, to a great extent, the character of an external system, designed to regulate the people of Israel, as a nation, and providing for the suspension, or for the entire removal, of offenders from the privileges of the people, and for the restoration to those privileges of such as should comply with appointed terms. It was a system emblematic of, and preparatory to, the gospel. It was a system, as we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews (9: 9—14), in which were offered gifts and sacrifices that could not purify the conscience and cleanse the heart; and it was to be superseded by that perfect system under Jesus, which provided, by the shedding of his blood, for the cleansing of the conscience from sin, for making men truly holy, and preparing them for the spiritual bliss of heaven. As is well observed by Scott, “The only effect of the sacrifices and purgations of the Mosaic law was admission into the congregation again, whence the breach of some positive ceremony had excluded a man; and some offences punishable with death admitted no sacrifice at all. Whereas this atone-

ment of Christ reaches to the perfect and eternal forgiveness of every kind and degree of transgression in them that sincerely believe and obey him.” Thus, while the law of Moses could not acquit those who lived under it from all their offences against God, those who believe in Jesus obtain forgiveness for all their sins, however numerous and aggravated. A full justification in the sight of God comes to every true disciple of Christ. Thus preëminent is the blessing which the gospel of Jesus proposes to men.

41 *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which*

ment of Christ reaches to the perfect and eternal forgiveness of every kind and degree of transgression in them that sincerely believe and obey him.” Thus, while the law of Moses could not acquit those who lived under it from all their offences against God, those who believe in Jesus obtain forgiveness for all their sins, however numerous and aggravated. A full justification in the sight of God comes to every true disciple of Christ. Thus preëminent is the blessing which the gospel of Jesus proposes to men.

40. *Beware, &c.* A caution against refusing to believe in Jesus now follows. || *In the prophets*; in the book of the prophets. The books of the twelve minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, were regarded as one book. The particular passage referred to by the apostle occurs in Habakkuk (1: 5); quoted, however, not with literal exactness, but according to its spirit, as showing the extreme danger of resisting the will of God.

41. *Behold, ye despisers, &c.* This verse, as used by the apostle, implies that some would despise the claims and the offered blessings of Jesus, as the Messiah, and that they would at last perish in amazement, as a consequence of their refusing to be his followers. They would be distinctly informed of what God had done for men’s salvation, but would not comply with his merciful arrangements. || *Wonder; be, or, ye shall be, filled with amazement at the impending judgments of God.* || *I work a work; I perform a work of righteous vengeance, a retribution for your disobedience.* || *Ye shall in no wise believe; ye will not at all believe.* So terrible would be the doom of those who should reject the Messiah, and live in disobedience to God, that, in prospect, it would seem to them incredi-

ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43 Now, when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed

ble. The language of the prophet, as quoted by Paul, is applicable both to the terrible temporal calamities which were to overtake the unbelieving Jews, and to the judgments of God which would await them in another world. To avoid the inconceivably awful doom of the enemies of God, the apostle enjoins a cordial reception of Jesus as the Messiah, and obedience to his gospel.

We cannot leave this address of the apostle's without noticing, how clear and convincing is the argument for the Messiahship of Jesus from the prophecies of the Old Testament, how conciliating and prudent, yet how faithful, is the address; what prominence it gives to the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ; and with what earnestness and solicitude it appeals to the conscience and the heart! May we listen to the apostle's solemn admonition, and give all diligence to secure a part in the great salvation!

42. *And when the Jews were gone out, &c.* A different version is here suggested by some editions of the Greek Testament; namely, *And when they [Paul and Barnabas] were going out of the synagogue of the Jews, the Gentiles (that is, the proselytes who were present) besought, &c.* || *That these words might be preached to them, &c.* They wished to receive further instruction in regard to the same subject, to have a fuller exposition of the views of Paul and Barnabas. || *The next sabbath.* The Jewish sabbath is, of course, here meant, answering to our Saturday.

43. *Now, when the congregation*

Paul and Barnabas; who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 *And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.*

45 *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by*

was broken up. The services in the synagogue appear, from the preceding verse, to have been already closed, and the people to have retired from the house. Reference may be had, in this verse, to the people's dispersing for their homes. After such an address as they had just heard, if not on ordinary occasions, the people who had been assembled would naturally wait a short time near the place of worship. || *Persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.* The persons who followed Paul and Barnabas were favorably affected towards the gospel, and professed to receive Jesus as the Messiah, rejoicing in the kindness, or grace, of God, which had, in the gospel, provided for their salvation. They were now directed to persevere in their attachment to the gospel. It is the gospel which is here denominated the grace of God, as being the provision of his grace, or favor, for our pardon and eternal happiness.—Continuance in a course of piety is indispensable to our evidence of being Christians, and our attainment of eternal life. See John 3: 31. Luke 8: 15. Compare Heb. 3: 14. 4: 11.

44. *Came almost the whole city together; Gentiles, as well as Jews; those who were not proselytes, as well as those who were.* The reports which had been circulated through the city brought a large multitude together on the sabbath.

45. *The Jews—were filled with envy; with heart-burning and indignation, that sentiments so different from their own were attracting so much attention and favor.* || *Blaspheming; reviling and slandering.*

Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God

They doubtless sought, by abusive language, to bring Paul and Barnabas into contempt, denouncing them as engaged in a false and disreputable cause. Such an excitement as arose in their breasts, and such conduct as they indulged in, ought to have convinced them that they were far from being friends of God, as they professed to be. It is greatly to be lamented, that the prosperity of religion and the conversion of sinners should excite ill-will and evil-speaking among those who feel not the power of divine truth, and even among some whose outward morality and general regard for religion secure for them universal respect.—What an unlovely spirit is that which becomes unhappy in seeing the increase of religious influence in a community! How evidently is such a spirit opposite to that of heaven, and inconsistent with true peace of mind!

46. *It was necessary, &c.* It was the Lord's arrangement that the Messiah should be first presented to the Jews, and be afterwards made known to the Gentiles. Not that the Jews had a prior claim; but God had, of his own good-will, selected their nation for this purpose, and made to them the promise of a Saviour who was to spring from the family of David. This kind arrangement on the part of God, imposed a peculiar obligation on the Jews to be a righteous people, and to receive the Messiah as soon as he should appear with the proper evidence of being such. The Jews would also necessarily incur the signal displeasure of God, should they fail to meet their obligations. Compare John 1: 11. Luke 24: 47, 49. Rom. 2: 9, 10. || *Ye put it from you; ye reject it.* || *And judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.* The instruction delivered by Paul respecting Jesus as the Saviour, re-

should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles:

vealed God's plan for bestowing eternal life on men. To reject this instruction was, in reality, to reject eternal life. The Jews showed, on this occasion, that they disesteemed such doctrine as Paul preached, because it did not agree with their views and feelings. But as eternal life could be obtained in no other way than that which he exhibited, they virtually considered it as unworthy of them to receive eternal life in such a way. Cherishing these feelings towards Jesus and his promise of eternal life, they would be at last treated as unsuitable to receive that life.—If we undervalue the spiritual benefits which God proposes to men, we ourselves shall be held as unfit to receive them. If we disesteem the divine method of bestowing these benefits, God will leave us to our pride. We must, if we would arrive at heaven, pass through the strait gate and walk in the narrow way. Matt. 7: 13, 14. What a mistake, alas! do men commit in refusing to receive the message of eternal life! || *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* The apostle did not mean, that he and his associate would make no further efforts at all for the salvation of the Jews; for afterwards, on visiting other cities, they first preached to the Jews. He meant that, as the Jews in Antioch had set themselves so strenuously against the gospel, he and Barnabas, feeling that it would be in vain to labor further for their good, would devote themselves to the more hopeful work of preaching to such Gentiles in that city as would hear them. They had given the Jews there the first opportunity; and their message had been rejected. Despairing of a more favorable reception among them, they must now leave them and turn to the Gentiles. A similar remark the apostle afterwards made to a company of Jews

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

(28: 28), when they showed a disposition unfriendly to the gospel; and added those words, so full of dreadful and yet joyful meaning, "They [the Gentiles] will hear it." And in a similar manner Jesus himself addressed the Jews who opposed him — "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. 21: 43.

Alas ! that any should slight the gospel, and make their rejection of it an occasion of its being withdrawn from them, and the ground of their personal ruin. Christ, however, will have followers. He will receive a recompense for his atoning sufferings, in the salvation of a countless multitude. However unwisely some account it a shame to be his followers, he will at length welcome into the heavenly mansions a happy throng, made wise unto salvation. Compare Luke 14: 22—24.

47. *For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, &c.* Compare Is. 49: 6. To show their Jewish hearers that their purpose to labor among the Gentiles was in accordance with the Lord's will, Paul appealed to a passage in Isaiah, in which the Messiah is spoken of as appointed to give knowledge and salvation to the Gentiles. The will of God had been clearly made known by the prophet, that the Saviour's blessings should be extended to the Gentiles. This was to be effected through the labors of the apostles and other ministers of Jesus; and hence the language which foretold that the Gentiles would partake of the Messiah's benefits, might well be regarded as a command of the Lord to his servants. The time, too, was evidently arrived for the Saviour's ministers to regulate their conduct by this known purpose of God, since the Jews were refusing to accept the blessings of the

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.

Messiah. — We cannot but admire the extensiveness of the divine bounty. As God makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, so his gospel is designed to be restricted to no narrow limits. Compare John 3: 16. 1 John 2: 2. How earnestly, then, ought we to pray and labor for the spread of the gospel throughout the world !

48. *The Gentiles — were glad.* They rejoiced at the glad tidings which made known to them the merciful purposes of God towards the Gentiles, and presented to them a sure hope of eternal life. It could not be otherwise than an occasion of joy, also, to see men who were Jews by birth, as were Paul and Barnabas, looking beyond the boundaries of their own people, and including all men in their kind regards. The Jews were generally disesteemed, as excluding from their kind feelings all who were not of their own nation or religion; but Paul showed, on this occasion, that Gentiles, as well as Jews, shared in his sympathies and labors; and that the gospel acknowledged no national partialities, but admitted to its blessings all who would accept them. || *And glorified the word of the Lord;* they spoke highly of the gospel. It had made known a Saviour for them, as well as for Jews. A new doctrine to these Gentiles; and how worthy of praise was the gospel ! as giving them a sure hope of eternal life, such as they could never find in all their heathen philosophy and religion, and such as they had not discovered even in what they had known of the Jewish religion. Whether all who were thus affected by the preaching became real converts or not, they yet perceived the superiority of the new doctrine to any thing they had before heard, and could not but admire it. And they willingly gave utterance to

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and

their admiration. || *And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed.* The sacred writer thus acknowledges God's previous merciful purpose to bestow eternal life on these persons. Their believing in Christ was the visible evidence that they had been appointed unto salvation (1 Thess. 5: 9); and it was natural that Luke, several years after the event had taken place, should, in recording this remarkable accession to the company of believers, connect with it a recognition of God's original design in regard to them. Incidental notices of this sort, in respect to the superintending providence and grace of God, are found elsewhere in the Scriptures. Compare 1 Thess. 3: 3. In respect to the sentiment here expressed by the historian, namely, that those who believe in Christ were previously appointed of God unto eternal life, see John 6: 37, 44. 17: 2. Eph. 1: 4, 5. 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14. 1 Pet. 1: 2. It must not be forgotten, however, that this merciful purpose on the part of God is carried into effect in perfect harmony with the voluntary agency of men. Men are not reluctantly brought to eternal life, but willingly become disciples of Christ, the Spirit of God renewing their hearts and giving them a disposition to obey the Saviour. Thus the Bible leads us to acknowledge, in the language of Bloomfield, "the grace of God, to which it is owing that men are ever disposed to embrace or obey the gospel of Christ."

The most natural construction of the original, in this passage, is that which appears on the face of it as presented in our version; and in such a way of considering it, various commentators of the most opposite doctrinal opinions are agreed.

49. *Throughout all the region;* the region, probably, to which Antioch, where the events just related oc-

the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust

curred, might be regarded as central.

50. *The devout and honorable women;* females of high standing in society, probably not of Jewish origin, but Gentiles, who had embraced the Jewish religion, and were devout in their way; that is, in observing the Jewish worship and ceremonies, and zealously maintaining the religious views which they had adopted. It appears from ancient history, that there were in various parts of the world great numbers of female proselytes to the Jewish religion. It was crafty policy in the Jews to excite these women against the Christian teachers, as not only their rank in society gave them influence, but they would also, doubtless, induce their husbands, who were probably still heathens, to increase the opposition against Paul and Barnabas. || *Chief men of the city.* While the Jews could easily induce their proselytes to oppose Paul, by representing his doctrine as hostile to the Jewish doctrine, they might also excite to opposition the chief men of the city, by hinting at the undesirableness of allowing a new religion to be introduced, which would unquestionably interfere with the heathen religion there practised. || *Expelled them out of their coasts;* made them depart beyond the limits of their city. The word *coast*, which now signifies *land washed by the sea*, as *sea-coast*, formerly signified *limit* or *border*, and was used in reference to countries and cities, as well as to the sea. As no mention is made of violence being offered to Paul and Barnabas, it is likely that such a show of determined opposition to the gospel was made, that they felt it their duty to yield to the current; yet not without a solemn warning of the guilt which was contracted in thus rejecting the message of eternal life.

51. *But they shook off the dust of*

of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XIV.

1 Paul and Barnabas are persecuted from Iconium. 8 At Lystra Paul healeth a cripple, whereupon they are reputed as gods. 19 Paul is stoned. 21 They pass through divers churches, confirming the disciples in faith and patience. 26 Returning to Anti-

their feet. When our Lord sent forth his twelve disciples, he said to them (Matt. 10: 14), “ Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet ” for a testimony (Mark 6: 11) against them. Compare Luke 10: 10, 11. This they were to do, not in anger, but in grief that any should reject the counsel of God to their own injury. The act of shaking off the dust of their feet showed, very significantly, their abhorrence of the guilt which was involved in rejecting the gospel. It showed that they dreaded to have any part or lot with a people that arrayed themselves so strenuously against God. And as they acted not in their private capacity, but as ambassadors and ministers of God, they thus gave warning of the rejection from God which awaited opposers, if they continued to despise the gospel. *¶ Against them ;* as bearing testimony against their conduct. *¶ Came unto Iconium ;* a large and populous city, east of Antioch, just on the border of the province of Lycaonia. Ancient writers sometimes speak of Iconium as belonging to Pisidia, sometimes to Phrygia, and sometimes to Lycaonia. The boundaries of the provinces in Asia Minor were often changed ; and hence there would be disagreement among writers as to the province to which some given city should be reckoned. In Luke’s time, Iconium probably belonged to Pisidia, as he gives no notice to the contrary.

52. *The disciples were filled with joy ;* on their own account, as having

done, they report what God had done with them.

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren.

become followers of Christ, and possessing the hope of eternal life, and on account of the Christian doctrine spreading throughout the region. Though persecuted by the adversaries of the Christian name, they yet had abundant consolation. *¶ And with the Holy Ghost.* Divine influence in great measure rested on these disciples, imparting to them every needed gift, and enriching them with piety. And thus they soon learned that the religion of Christ can give abundant joy, even in times of distress.

CHAPTER XIV.

Paul and Barnabas proceed in their work of preaching the gospel. This chapter relates their further progress in their missionary tour from Iconium to Lystra, and thence to Derbe. From Derbe they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, to Antioch in Pisidia ; thence to Perga in Pamphylia, and to Attalia ; from which last place they set sail for Antioch in Syria, whence they commenced their tour.

1. *And so spake, that a great multitude, &c.* They presented such convincing arguments, and such persuasive appeals, and their preaching was accompanied with such influence from the Holy Spirit, that a great number became disciples of Jesus. *¶ And also of the Greeks ;* Greek proselytes to the Jewish religion, probably, and other Greeks who may have occasionally attended on the worship of the synagogue, or who were drawn thither by the fame of Paul and Barnabas.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles,

and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

6 They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's

3. *Speaking boldly in the Lord*; publishing the doctrine of the Lord with much freedom and force, confiding in his promise of aid. || *The word of his grace*; the gospel, called the *word of divine grace*, because it makes known God's merciful purposes and arrangements for the salvation of men. || *Granted signs and wonders to be done*, &c. The miracles which Paul and Barnabas were enabled to perform, were God's testimony to the truth of their instructions. So, in respect to our Saviour, Nicodemus acknowledged that he must be "a teacher come from God," because no man could do the miracles which Jesus wrought unless God were with him. John 3: 2. Compare, also, John 5: 36. 10: 37, 38.

4. *The multitude of the city was divided*, &c. Thus it has always been, to a greater or less extent. Wherever the gospel is preached, whether in heathen lands, or in countries where it has always been known, some become Christians, and some remain indifferent to its claims, or become hostile to it. Such divisions are to be expected; and even persecution against the followers of Christ, when his doctrine is first introduced, or a purer form of it begins to be maintained in any place, need not occasion surprise. The Saviour predicted such a result from introducing his gospel. Compare Matt. 10: 34—36. || *The apostles*. This term is here applied to both Barnabas and Paul, as also in the fourteenth verse. It is to be taken in the general sense of their being the Lord's *messengers*, rather than in that

specific sense in which we speak of *the apostles*, who were favored with an extraordinary commission as the Saviour's authorized ambassadors and representatives, and whose instructions and writings bore the stamp of inspiration. Such a one was Paul peculiarly; and it is probably on this account that so marked a superiority is ascribed to him during the whole of the sacred writer's account.

5. *When there was an assault made*. A violent attack was contemplated, and preparations were made for it both by the common people and by the chief men of the city. || *To use them despitefully*; to treat them with abuse.

6. *They were ware of it*. They obtained knowledge of the hostile movement. || *And fled*. So had the Saviour directed his disciples—"When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Matt. 10: 23. || *Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia*. Lycaonia was another province of Asia Minor, lying next to Pisidia on the north-east. Lystra and Derbe were in a southern direction from Iconium.

8. *There sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet*; having no strength in his feet. The word *sat* is by some considered equivalent here to *dwell*, or *was*. Since, however, the man "had never walked," this word is to be taken in its proper meaning. Being unable to walk, it is probable he sat in some place suitable for attracting the notice of the people and exciting their sympathy, like the blind man in John 9: 8, who "sat and

womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

begged," or the lame man in Acts 3: 2, who was daily laid at one of the temple-gates in Jerusalem.

9. *Who—perceiving that he had faith to be healed*; that is, perceiving in him a belief that he should be healed by the power of Paul. He had "heard Paul speak;" and was thus made acquainted with the principal truths of the Christian religion, especially with the character and the claims of Jesus. Paul had, doubtless, referred, in his speaking, to the miraculous works which attested the gospel. The lame man may also have heard of the wonderful works performed by Paul and Barnabas in Iconium. v. 3. He was thus led to believe, that on him, too, a similar miracle might be performed; and he manifested in some way the confident belief he was cherishing, that he might be healed by the same miraculous agency. His countenance might have indicated his inward desire and expectation. He would learn, also, from Paul's instructions, that the power of healing with a word dwelt not in him, but in Christ, whose servant he professed to be; and thus the man's faith rested ultimately on Christ. A cheerful confidence in the Saviour's power to bestow such a blessing, is uniformly represented as peculiarly acceptable to him, and as being always followed with a blessing. See Matt. 8: 13. 9: 22, 28. 15: 28. Paul's attention appears to have been peculiarly attracted towards this man; and the apostle's earnest and continued looking at him would encourage in him the expectation of receiving a cure.

10. *Stand upright, &c.* Compare 3: 6, 7.

11. *In the speech of Lycaonia.* The

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

various regions of the ancient world, into which, through conquest and other causes, the Greek language had been introduced, still retained their former languages also, and when occasion seemed to require, the people would speak in those languages. The people of Lystra, on the occasion here related, used their original dialect. What language this belonged to, it is impossible now to determine. Some learned men have supposed it to have been related to the Assyrian; and others have regarded it as a corrupt form of the Greek. || *In the likeness of men.* So surprising an act of kindness and power had been performed on the lame man, that those heathens at once concluded their visitors must have come from heaven, and must have been no less than divinities in human form.

12. *Jupiter*; the name, in heathen mythology, of the god who was considered as supreme. || *Mercurius*; Mercury. This divinity, according to the notions of the ancient heathens, presided over eloquence, and was held to be the messenger of Jupiter, whom the latter employed in his communications to men. These heathens would the more readily believe that Jupiter was visiting and blessing them, because their city paid special honors to Jupiter, having in its immediate vicinity a temple dedicated to him, and being considered as sacred to him. And as Mercury was the god of eloquence, they believed Paul to be Mercury, since he was chief speaker. There were, also, stories current among the heathen of those times, that Mercury was the usual companion of Jupiter, when Jupiter descended to the earth. They eagerly caught at the idea,

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

therefore, that these two remarkable strangers must be those divinities. "The persuasion of their being Jupiter and Mercury might gain the more easily on the minds of the Lycaonians, on account of the well-known fable of Jupiter and Mercury, who were said to have descended from heaven in human shape, and to have been entertained by Lycaon, from whom the Lycaonians received their name."

13. *The priest of Jupiter*; probably the chief of the priests who were devoted to the worship of Jupiter. || *Which was before their city*. It was common to erect, in the immediate vicinity of heathen cities, a temple in honor of some one of the gods. Thus at Lystra there was a temple, dedicated to Jupiter, in front of the city; and hence it is here said by way of abbreviation, that Jupiter was before their city. A city was considered as being under the special protection of the divinity to whom the temple had been erected. || *Brought oxen and garlands*. The sacrificing of victims was a chief part of the ancient heathen worship; and the animals here mentioned were the ones usually offered to the two divinities, Jupiter and Mercury. When an animal was to be offered in sacrifice, it was decked up with garlands, or wreaths, of flowers about the head. || *Unto the gates*; the city gates, probably; though some suppose the gates of the house in which Paul and Barnabas were accommodated, are meant. || *Would have done sacrifice, &c.*; wished to offer sacrifice, or was about to do so.

There is an interesting incident related in one of the journals of Mr. Kincaid, missionary to the Burman empire, which may partially illustrate the preceding account. While visiting a family in Arracan, "we heard," he says, "a great outcry in the street—

14 *Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of*, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye

there were dozens of voices, of men, women, and children.—'What is the meaning of this great noise and outcry?' I inquired. The patriarch of the family very coolly replied, that some one in the vicinity had just been attacked with cholera. I proposed going to the house, and half a dozen followed me. I found a strong, muscular man lying on the floor, and rolling in the greatest agony, muttering a sort of prayer for help. The prospect of immediate death wrought so powerfully on his mind, that it was difficult to say which was greatest, his mental, or his bodily, suffering. His wife and children, too, were weeping and smiting their breasts. The legs and arms of the poor man were cold as marble, and a clammy, cold sweat covered his whole body. The man was rapidly sinking. As soon as possible, I gave him the medicines usually prescribed, and in less than an hour he was comparatively free from pain, and rapidly recovering. The family and friends were wild with joy, and extravagant in their praise. *I could hardly keep them from doing religious homage at my feet.*" Baptist Missionary Magazine, July, 1842, p. 188.

14. *They rent their clothes*. By this act, the meaning of which would almost at once be felt, Paul and Barnabas expressed their utter unwillingness to receive such tokens of reverence, and their abhorrence of such idolatrous practices. It was an act which would spontaneously occur to them, because the Jews were accustomed to rend their garments, as a token of abhorrence, or indignation, or grief. See Matt. 26: 65. Gen. 37: 29, 34. 44: 13. Josh. 7: 6. It would seem that Paul and Barnabas did not know that they had been mistaken for divinities, till the multitude was assembled, and the preparations for the sacrifice were far

these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth,

advanced. The remarks of the people concerning them may not have been made in their presence, or, being in the dialect of Lycaonia, may not have been apprehended by them; so that, before they were aware, they found themselves on the point of having idolatrous worship paid them.

15. *We also are men of like passions with you.* The word *passions* should here be understood, not as referring to anger and other violent emotions, but as meaning *infirmities* and *sufferings*. The original Greek would be more properly expressed thus—We are frail, mortal men, like yourselves. As Paul and Barnabas were taken to be gods, they instantly endeavored to dispel this delusion, and to convince the priest and the multitude that they were but men. The chief point in which the ancient heathens believed the gods to differ from men, was, that they were free from frailty and mortality. They were believed to possess many of the passions which belong to human nature. Revenge and various unholly desires, and even gross sensual appetites, were ascribed, with the utmost freeness, to the gods. But from the sorrows and pains of human life, and especially from death, they were regarded as exempt. Hence Paul and Barnabas declared themselves to be only men, frail, mortal beings, of the same nature and condition as the very persons who were about to pay them divine honors.—It may not be amiss to remark here, that this expression—*of like passions*—has a similar meaning in James 5:17, where Elias [Elijah] is said to have been “a man of like passions with us;” that is, he was only a frail, mortal man, like ourselves. || *Ye should turn from these vanities*; from these vain, useless superstitions, these vain idols. In reality, and in the judgment of these Christian teachers, an idol was a mere

and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

nothing, an utter vanity; a heathen *god* was a mere creature of the imagination. || *Unto the living God.* The epithet *living* is here applied to God, as distinguishing him from the mere imaginary, non-existing deities of the heathen. *They* are, if we may use such a word, mere *nothings*; *He* is the true, the living God, possessing underived and endless life himself, and the author of life to all creatures. So, in Jer. 10:10, 14, 15, Jehovah is declared to be “the true God, the *living God*;” while heathen gods are “falsehood, there is no breath in them, they are vanity and the work of errors.” The whole passage in Jeremiah, 10:1—16, may be very profitably read in this connection. It is a most impressive description of Jehovah’s claims to be regarded as the only true God. || *Which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, &c.* Compare 4:24. Ps. 96:5. The great truth, expressed in these words, was now, perhaps for the first time, announced to that heathen company. Instead of there being only one God, they had been taught that there were countless gods of different ranks. And instead of the heaven, and earth, and all things proceeding from him by creation, they probably either referred all things to chance, or regarded some divine being as merely reducing to order, and fashioning into shape, materials supposed to have existed from eternity. The simple, yet sublime truth, that “in the beginning *God created* the heaven and the earth,” was not discovered by unaided philosophy. We are indebted for it to revelation. Hence the apostle, in Heb. 11:3, says, “Through *faith* we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear,” but were brought into being out of nothing by the creating

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings

power of the eternal God. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33:9.

16. *Who — suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*; more literally, all the nations, that is, the Gentiles. He left the Gentiles to go on in their ignorance and idolatry, without specially revealing his will, and interposing to prevent their course of wickedness. He did not approve of their idolatry, or their evil practices in general; nor was he indifferent to their sinful conduct. The time was not yet come, however, for the full and final revelation of his will through the Messiah, and for the disclosure of the divine plan for establishing righteousness among men. Men were left, comparatively, to themselves, and they therefore persisted in idolatry and sin. Compare 17:30. — It is worthy of distinct remark, that, when men are "suffered to walk in their own ways," they persist in ignorance, and error, and sin; and that God's interposing influence is always designed, and always tends of itself, if not resisted, to lead men to knowledge and holiness. God's special influence is for salvation, not for destruction. Men destroy themselves by following the corrupt bent of their own hearts, not by following divine influences.

17. But though God did not specially and fully declare his abhorrence of men's wickedness, nor fully disclose his character and will, by special revelation, still he gave ample proofs of his being, and of his superintending providence, and placed men under strong obligations of gratitude to him. The sins of the Gentiles were without adequate excuse; and had they obeyed the intimations which God gave of his will, and had they yielded to the impression which the bountiful goodness of divine prov-

erice restrained them the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

19 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch, and Iconium, who persuaded the people,

idence was adapted to make on their minds, they could not have passed their lives in such guilt as they were perpetually incurring. — *Filling our hearts with food and gladness*; bountifully supplying us with food, and filling our hearts with happiness. By a similar train of remark, the apostle, in Rom. 1:19, 20, shows that God had borne testimony to his own existence, his power and deity, so amply as to leave men without excuse for not glorifying him as God; and the sins which have prevailed in heathen nations he represents (Rom. 1:24, 25) as resulting from God's judicial and just abandonment of them to their own hearts — an abandonment caused by their practical abandonment of him. Of the subject thus touched, see an instructive view in Rom. 2:4, 5, 12—15.

NOTICE the simplicity and sincerity which characterized Paul and Barnabas. They sought not honor from men. They promptly rejected, with most decided disapproval, the tokens of undue respect which the people were desirous to confer on them. It was not for their own glory, but for the glory of God in extending the gospel, and in the salvation of men, that they were laboring.

19. *Jews from Antioch*; Antioch in Pisidia, in which city Paul had recently excited so much interest by his preaching, and from which he had been driven. 13:14, 50, 51. || *Iconium*. See 13:51. 14:1. || *Who persuaded the people*; gained favor with the multitude, and set them against Paul and Barnabas. They doubtless represented them to the people as enemies of religion; and these idolaters, recollecting what they had said respecting heathen deities and worship, might construe their

and having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached

language into contempt of the gods. Paul, rather than Barnabas, appears to have been the special object of their ill-will, because he was more forward in preaching. || *Having stoned Paul.* To this instance of stoning the apostle refers in 2 Cor. 11:25 — “Once was I stoned.” || *Drew him out of the city, &c.* Paul had, doubtless, fallen, while the crowd were stoning him; and in this condition he was violently drawn out of the city, apparently dead. The multitude did not, of course, examine closely, and they left him for dead. He had swooned away, and lay for a time senseless.

We cannot but notice what an instance of men’s fickleness this chapter records. The man who was regarded as a god, and to whom a sacrifice was on the very point of being offered, the people now unite in denouncing and stoning, as unfit even to live! Popularity is, indeed, often a fleeting shadow. Let the love and fear of God expel our inordinate regard for the favor, or the frown, of man. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matt. 10:23. Let the supreme value of heavenly good, which is freely offered to us, check our sensibility to the honors of earth.

How much easier, alas! it is to persuade men to iniquity than to true religion!

20. *As the disciples stood round about him;* perhaps watching for signs of life; perhaps even making preparations to bury him. || *He rose*

the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

up, and came into the city. Whether he was preternaturally enabled at once to walk back into the city, or waited a short interval to regain strength, does not appear. There was, however, a special care of divine providence over Paul, both in preserving him from death, and in giving him sufficient strength to prosecute his journey on the following day. || *Derbe.* See on v. 6.

21. *And had taught many;* more literally, had made many disciples. They did not teach in Derbe in vain; many, as in the other cities, became converts to the truth. The city of Derbe was the most distant place which they visited during this tour. They now commenced their return, again visiting the churches they had formed, and encouraging them to Christian fidelity.

22. *Confirming the souls of the disciples;* strengthening them in the Christian faith. These recent converts needed particular instruction and encouragement, in view of the persecutions which their teachers had suffered. The storm of hatred might again gather and break upon the heads of those who had given their names to Christ, under the teaching of Paul and Barnabas. || *We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* So our Saviour taught — “If any man (Matt. 16:24, 25) will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” And, for our encouragement, he has assured us, “There is no man that hath left house, or brethren or sis-

23 And when they had ordained

ters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred fold now, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life." Mark 10: 29, 30. Compare the interesting passage in Rev. 7: 13—15. The persecutions and various troubles to which pious persons are at any time subjected in this life, are designed, in the providence of God, to test their faith, to confirm their patience and love, to withdraw their affections from the world, and excite their aspirations for that holy state of bliss where the righteous will be forever with the Lord. Troubles are an almost essential part of the Lord's discipline in training up his children on earth for heaven. See Heb. 12: 5, 6. And yet how prone are we to overlook this merciful design of our heavenly Father, and to say, with the patriarch Jacob (Gen. 42: 36), "All these things are against me"! A true belief in Christ, however, if it is allowed its proper influence, can help us to "glory in tribulations." See Rom. 5: 3—5. James 1: 2. Compare John 16: 33.

23. *And when they had ordained them elders in every church.* The word *ordained* is here equivalent to *chose*, or *appointed*. The original word, viewed according to its etymology, expresses the act of voting; but usage had doubtless given it the signification to *appoint*, in whatever way the appointment was made. Paul and Barnabas probably selected the men who were to be elders. It by no means follows, however, that each church did not also act in this matter, and receive the elders as the men of their own choice. From the acquaintance which Paul and Barnabas had with the Christians, they could form a judgment on which reliance would be placed, as to the best persons for officers; and, having made known their views by way of advice, the members of the churches, doubtless, agreed to have those men for officers who had been thus named.

them elders in every church, and

Thus each church took an active part in choosing its own officers, though it availed itself of apostolical guidance and advice in respect to the men, and the men selected by Paul and Barnabas entered on their office in accordance with the expressed desires of the church. In matters of this nature, and on questions touching the prosperity of the churches, it seems to have been the practice, in those early times, for *the body of the church* to consult together, and form a final decision. The apostles did not *impose* any measures on the churches; they gave their advice, and, as might be expected, the churches took the advice, and made it the basis of their action; so that the churches themselves acted in their independent capacity. Compare 1: 15, 23, 26. 6: 2, 3, 5. No mention is made, in this verse, of the joint action of apostles and of the churches in appointing elders; but a comparison of this passage with those just referred to, naturally leads to such a conclusion; and in so brief notices as Luke gives us, we ought not to expect minute information in every instance of this kind. It was probably the case in general, where the opinion and advice of apostles could be obtained, they were sought and gladly received, and formed the basis for the church's action. Arranging of church affairs, in those primitive times, was performed in a very familiar manner, in the spirit of fraternal union. There was little temptation then for ambition on one part, or for jealousy on the other.

The word *elders*, in this verse, is probably equivalent to the general term *officers*, and includes the pastor, or bishop, and the deacons; these being the two classes of officers mentioned in the New Testament, as existing in a Christian church. Compare Phil. 1: 1. 1 Tim. 3: 1, 8. || *Prayed with fasting.* The appointment of men to office in the Christian church was a matter of deep solemnity. A special blessing was sought by prayer;

had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia :

and fasting was observed, as fitted to increase the spirit of devotion. || *They commended them to the Lord*; and thus took their leave of them.

24. *Passed throughout Pisidia*; on their way back to Syria. Compare 13:14. || *Pamphylia*. See on 13:13.

25. *Perga*. See on 13:13. || *Attalia*; a seaport in Pamphylia, not far west from Perga.

26. *Thence sailed to Antioch*; that is, to Antioch in Syria, from which city they set out on their tour of preaching. 13:4. They took ship from Attalia, and landed probably at Seleucia (13:4), on the coast of Syria; whence they travelled by land to Antioch. || *From whence they had been recommended*, &c. See 13:1, 3, 4. They had been commended, or committed, to the favor of God in going forth on their mission in obedience to the Holy Spirit's direction. The care of divine providence had been sought for their protection, and the influences of the Spirit implored for enabling them rightly to present the truth, and for inclining their hearers to receive it. Nor was this commanding to God in vain. God approved and blessed.

27. *When they—had gathered the church together*. The whole church in Antioch felt an interest in the mission of Paul and Barnabas; for they went forth to convey the glad tidings which had been so welcome to the Christians in that city. And though they went by special commission from the Holy Spirit, they were sent forth also, in an important sense, by the church in Antioch, and were representatives of the Christian cause. || *They rehearsed all*, &c. The church

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he

naturally wished to hear the particulars of their tour, not for jealousy's sake, but from regard to the salvation of men, and for rendering praise to God. The intelligence, they had no doubt, would be of a most encouraging character in respect to further endeavors for spreading the gospel. Thus ought there always to be a fraternal harmony between ministers and churches; the officers and the private members, in their several spheres, co-operating, and cheering one another. || *All that God had done with them*. They were instruments in God's hand. The Lord wrought with them and confirmed their word. Mark 16:20. The blessing came from him. In this incidental manner, the sacred writers often make acknowledgment of the most important principles of religion. Their minds were so imbued with divine truth, that it was only for them to begin to speak, or to write, in regard to it, when, in addition to their direct object, they gave numerous indirect evidences of many connected doctrines. See 1 Cor. 3:5—7, 9, for an impressive exhibition of the thought, that ministers are but instruments in the hands of God, and that all the efficiency which attends their labors in the conversion of men and the building up of the church, must be ascribed to God. || *He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles*. The Christians at Antioch knew, of course, before this time, that the gospel had, agreeably to the Lord's will, been preached to the Gentiles. Some of their own number were converted Gentiles. But the success which attended the labors of Paul and Barnabas among Gentiles as well as Jews, strongly confirmed them in the

had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

truth of its being God's plan to favor Gentiles with the privileges of the gospel. They saw that God had indeed opened the door for Gentiles to come into the Christian church and the kingdom of heaven; they saw, too, that he had opened it very widely, and that access to the Saviour was as free and ready for Gentiles as for Jews.

We have thus finished the inspired account of Paul's first apostolical tour in Asia Minor, in which he was accompanied by Barnabas. It might be profitable, now, for the reader to trace the apostle's course on the map.—Starting from Antioch, in Syria, where was a church next in honor to that of Jerusalem, as being a radiating point of light and salvation, he and his companion repair to Seleucia, on the Syrian sea-coast. Thence they go to Cyprus, and traverse the island through its whole length from Salamis on the east to Paphos on the west. Thence they sail to the main land on the north, and arrive at Perga in the province of Pamphylia, and thence depart for Antioch in the province of Pisidia. They then proceed to Iconium, and pass on to Lystra and Derbe in the province of Lycaonia. They now begin a homeward course, and return by the same way as far as Perga. In the neighboring seaport of Attalia, they take ship and sail to the Syrian coast, and arrive safely at the point from which they started.

The main burden of their preaching was, Jesus of Nazareth, the long-expected Messiah and Saviour. The Jews were in expectation of the Messiah, but had exceedingly erroneous opinions as to his character and purposes. When Jesus came, professing to be the Messiah, he so entirely differed from the idea which they had been cherishing, that they crucified him as an impostor. Evidence, however, of his being really the Messiah, was increased by the very fact of his being put to death; and no unprejudiced man could any longer, after

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

the events of the day of Pentecost, and the many attestations which had been given from heaven in the form of miracles, of deliverances wrought for the apostles, and in the blessing of God in the spread of the Christian doctrine, reasonably doubt that Jesus was, indeed, the Holy One of God, and that the Jewish rulers had committed an awful and extremely criminal mistake. The question, which was then an all-important one, and full of immediate interest, was, Is Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah? To convince the Jews of the truth on this point, and to persuade them to believe in Jesus and become his disciples for their pardon and salvation, was a chief and primary object of the first preachers. And when circumstances led them to address Gentiles on the subject of religion, all those elementary truths respecting God and man's duty and prospects were presented (14: 15—17), which it was not so necessary to introduce before Jewish hearers.

It is well to notice, also, a remarkable advantage with which the apostles were providentially favored in spreading the gospel. Not only did they perform miracles and speak various languages, as a divine attestation to the truth of their doctrine, but they had ready access to established congregations for public worship. The Jews had synagogues in all the cities where they dwelt, and maintained weekly assemblies for worship on the sabbath. To these assemblies, the apostles, as being Jews by birth, were admitted, both to hear and to speak. And as the Jews were expecting the Messiah, and this subject was always intensely interesting to them, and as the Old Testament, in various portions, was uniformly read in the synagogue worship, the apostles could introduce their doctrine respecting Jesus without interfering with any Jewish usages. Many of the Jews, too, would give them ready admission to their

CHAPTER XV.

1 Great dissension ariseth touching circumcision. 6 The apostles consult about it,

houses for accommodation; they would find friends wherever they went, and would not need any system of arrangements among the Christians of their acquaintance for their support, as they would if they had been going among people who owned no relation to them, and who would, in almost every respect, regard them with distrust. In short, the way was, to a great extent, open and prepared for them; and in many instances, they found hearers not only eager for religious instruction, but ready to embrace the message of salvation by Jesus Christ. God had signally provided for a speedy establishment of the gospel, notwithstanding the determined opposition which arose against it from various quarters.

The apostles, too, were full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, living under the powerful influence of unseen realities, and burning with zeal for the honor of Christ and the salvation of men. They were raised up for the special work of establishing and spreading the gospel, and were divinely qualified for their work; and God made his gracious purpose prosper in their hands. To Him be all the glory.

CHAPTER XV.

The extension of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the large accessions from among them to the Christian body, became an occasion of disagreement in the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch, in regard to the Jewish rite of circumcision. The Jews had been educated in the belief that the religious customs established by Moses, were, at least in part, to be of permanent duration, and that, though the dispensation by the Messiah was to include all nations, yet the nations were to become Jews as to religious practices, and, by first becoming Jews, to be admitted to the blessings of the Messiah's people. The distinguishing rite of the Jewish reli-

22 and send their determination by letters to the churches. 36 Paul and Barnabas, thinking to visit the brethren together, fall at strife, and depart asunder.

gion — namely, circumcision — they believed was to be observed every where and always. Since the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius, however, and the remarkable manifestation, connected with that event, of its being God's will that the privileges of the gospel should be extended to the Gentiles, without their first becoming Jews, and that their believing in Christ was a sufficient preparation for introducing them into the church, it appears to have been generally acknowledged that Gentiles, who should be converted to the Christian faith, might be received into the church without being circumcised. See 11:18. The gospel now spread rapidly among the Gentiles, and the necessity of the Jewish rites being observed by them was not at all maintained by those whose labors were blessed among them. At the same time, however, in thousands of instances (Acts 21:20), Jews who had become Christians still avowed their own adherence to the law of Moses; and many of them, particularly from among the Pharisees, regarded circumcision and the observance of Moses' law as still binding, and as necessary to salvation. As Gentiles were now embracing the gospel, becoming disciples of the Messiah, these Jews maintained that the Gentiles could not be considered as really children of God and heirs of the Messiah's blessings, and thus entitled to the hope of salvation, without receiving circumcision. This feeling appears to have been very strong among many Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. It readily found defenders elsewhere, as it was so harmonious with all the early lessons in Jewish families, and with their prejudices against the Gentiles. As Antioch had become so eminently a station of Christian influence, and as teachers had gone forth from that city avowedly to preach the gospel to Gentiles as well as to Jews, it was

AND certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 When therefore Paul and

Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

be dated as far back as the time of Abraham.

2. *Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them.* The minds of Paul and Barnabas were entirely unembarrassed in regard to Jewish ceremonies ; and they saw the necessity of promptly withstanding those who were endeavoring to connect with the gospel of Christ the practices of Judaism, as if they were essential to salvation. On this point, Paul, during his ministry, had repeated occasions to instruct the churches ; and though, for the sake of accommodation to prejudices, and when Christian principle would not be sacrificed, he would even practise some Jewish rites (16:3. 1 Cor. 9:20—22), yet, when such rites were enjoined as a part of *Christian duty*, and as *essential to salvation*, he could not for a moment yield his assent, or keep silence. See Gal. 2:4, 5. In the disputation, that is, debate, which arose in Antioch, both Paul and Barnabas expressed themselves, no doubt, in a very decided manner. || *They determined* ; the brethren at Antioch determined. || *Unto the apostles and elders.* The apostles had adequate authority for settling questions which involved great principles in the Christian faith.

They were the Lord's representatives on earth ; and he had promised to give them such a knowledge of his will as would render them competent guides. See Matt. 18:18. John 16:13. Compare John 20:22. Acts 1:8. It was specially becoming, too, that in this consultation about so important a subject, respect should be paid to the officers of the church in Jerusalem, and such a course taken as would tend to quiet agitation, and to satisfy the whole Christian community. The design was, to have a council of men, in

natural that these adherents to old Jewish views should endeavor to influence the church in Antioch. Accordingly, we learn from the first verse of this chapter, that disagreement on this point was introduced into the church at Antioch by persons from Judea. And as the church in Antioch was composed of both Jews and Gentiles, the subject was to that church an exceedingly important one. The Jewish Christians there would probably, in some instances, regard such an opinion with favor, and might easily be led to disesteem their Gentile brethren, unless the latter would submit to the Mosaic law. The Gentile Christians could not readily adopt these Jewish views ; such views did not belong to the gospel, and were not taught by the men from whom they had received the gospel. Thus there was danger of heart-burning and divisions. And as churches were every where springing up, containing, in like manner, Jews and Gentiles, it was highly important to establish some principle on the subject, which would universally apply. The sacred historian proceeds to inform us how this difficulty was adjusted.

1. *Certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren* ; the brethren in Antioch of Syria, where Paul and Barnabas now were. Compare 14:23. These men from Judea came on their private responsibility, not having the countenance of the apostles and of the church in Jerusalem. See v. 24. || *After the manner of Moses* ; according to the custom which Moses, by divine authority, established. The Jewish religion, as to its formal regulations, was properly traced back to the time of Moses ; though some things connected with it, and especially circumcision, are to

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things

whose inspired wisdom and conscientious solicitude for all parties concerned and for the church in all coming time, the most entire confidence might be placed.

3. *Being brought on their way, &c.*; literally, being sent forward. It was customary, as a token of interest and respect, for friends to accompany, for a short distance, those who were setting out on a journey. See 20:38. 21:5. Reference may also be had, in this expression, to the brethren's promptly furnishing whatever was requisite for the delegates on their journey to Jerusalem. || *Phenice*; Phenicia, in the north-west part of Palestine. See on 11:19. || *Samaria*; the central portion of Palestine. The messengers from Antioch would pass through these sections of country on their way to Jerusalem. In these sections they found believers, and made known to them the triumphs of the gospel among the Gentiles, during the recent tour of Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor.

4. *They were received of the church, &c.* The language seems to imply that a public meeting was held on the arrival of Paul and Barnabas at Jerusalem from Antioch; yet, not a meeting for discussing the question which had carried them thither. It was rather designed for giving them an honorable and fraternal reception, and for receiving intelligence from them. It is pleasing to notice here the mention of the church, as well as of its officers and of the apostles. All felt an interest in the prosperity of the Christian cause, and were united, as in a common concern. A good pattern for Christians in every

that God had done with them.

5. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

age. Between the officers and the body of the church, heartfelt union and mutual interest ought ever to be cherished. || *All things, &c.* See on 14:27.

5. *But there rose up certain, &c.* It could hardly be otherwise, than that Paul and Barnabas, while relating the conversion of the Gentiles, should mention the subject which had occasioned dissension in Antioch, and for consultation in regard to which they had been sent to Jerusalem. The mention of this subject gave room for some members of the church in Jerusalem to make a distinct and earnest avowal of the same sentiments which had been urged at Antioch respecting the necessity of the converted Gentiles' keeping the Jewish law. So zealous were some of the Jewish Christians on this party question, that they would seize on any opportunity to express their views. || *Of the sect of the Pharisees.* The Pharisees were always peculiarly attached to forms and ceremonies, and the external righteousness of the law. Many of the Pharisees who had been converted to Christianity, still retained some of their former opinions, and particularly their long-cherished regard for the ceremonies of the Mosaic religion.

6. *The apostles and elders came together, &c.* The wisdom and piety possessed by the apostles and the officers of the church, were necessary for a consideration of the question which was to be discussed. It was an occasion, too, on which these servants of the Lord might confidently expect their Master's spiritual presence and aid. See Matt. 18:19, 20.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

The decision which they should agree upon, would doubtless be accepted by the whole company of believers in Jerusalem. It would seem from vs. 12, 22, 23, that others were present as well as the apostles and elders. The consultation was probably confined to them in the first instance ; and the assembled company of the believers expressed a concurrence in their views.

7. *And when there had been much disputing* ; not angry disputing, but discussion. There was variety of opinion among the brethren, on the subject under consideration. The apostles might have decided this matter by virtue of their authority from the Saviour, without consulting any of their associates. But in great wisdom, they united others with them in consultation on this agitating subject, so that there might be opportunity for a frank expression of opinion, and, at length, for an harmonious adjustment of the matter on a ground more satisfactory than that of authority, to those who were particularly concerned. Hence it was not till after much discussion, probably among the elders, that the apostles expressed their views. An instructive example ! When even inspired men did not claim to dictate, nor demand an unquestioning deference to their views, but sought to have important matters properly consulted on by those who had become specially interested in them, and to do nothing in a forcible manner, how proper it is for Christians in all church-business to act on grounds of mutual interest and confidence ! || *A good while ago* ; some time since. The expression is an indefinite one. According to the usual reckoning, about twelve years had elapsed since Peter's interview with Cornelius. || *That the Gentiles,*

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did unto us* :

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye *by my mouth*, &c. See the tenth chapter of this book.

8. *God, which knoweth the hearts* ; and who cannot, therefore, be deceived, or be ignorant, as to men's hearts, but who is an adequate judge of their fitness to enjoy the blessings of the Christian church, and to be candidates for heaven. || *Bare them witness* ; gave indubitable evidence of his accepting them as the Saviour's disciples. || *Giving them the Holy Ghost* ; bestowing on them the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. See 10 : 44—46. || *Even as he did unto us* ; unto us, Jewish Christians, on the day of Pentecost. 2 : 4.

9. *Put no difference between us and them* ; treated them just as he treated us, leaving us, Jews, no ground of superiority over the Gentiles, as though they were less favorably regarded by him than we were. || *Purifying their hearts* ; cleansing them from sin, and thus effecting in them the reality, of which circumcision was an emblem. Compare Rom. 2 : 29. God thus showed that he did not regard them, though uncircumcised, as unsuitable for his favor ; he accepted them equally with the Jews who believed. God made no account of circumcision. The distinction, in short, on which the Jews rested their preminence, was now done away. Whether a person was a Jew or not, was a question of no importance, so far as acceptance with God and fitness for membership in the Christian church, and for salvation, were concerned. As God had purified their hearts, they were no longer to be regarded unclean, though they were uncircumcised. They were not, then, to be treated as unworthy of a place among the Messiah's followers. Thus God had shown, by pouring his blessing on the

God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither

Gentiles, that circumcision was not necessary for admission to the benefits which the Messiah bestows. || *By faith*; by faith in Christ, by the gospel. The truths of the gospel received into the heart are purifying principles. They oppose the love of sin; they elevate the views and feelings, and make men hunger and thirst after righteousness. Reliance on Christ not only justifies the soul in the sight of God, but secures, according to divine promise, the aid of the Holy Spirit. The filial confidence in God which accompanies faith in Jesus, gives constant encouragement in the way of righteousness, keeps the believer from despondency, and enables him to persevere in his endeavors to overcome every sinful tendency.

10. *Now therefore, why tempt ye God?* Since, then, God has so clearly manifested his acceptance of believing Gentiles, giving them, though uncircumcised, the same tokens of favor as he has given to Jewish believers, why should we call in question his will? why put it further to the test whether God requires that they be circumcised or not? *To tempt God* is to subject him to a proof, or test; to seek from him some new, or more decided, disclosure of his will, through doubts whether a disclosure which he may have already made is sufficiently clear. In the present case, Peter would intimate that God had very clearly made known his will; and asks, Why, overlooking or distrusting the clear manifestations of God's will, and regarding them as not significant, or expressive, do you seek to draw from him some other and more striking exhibitions of his will, thus trying whether God really means what he has so plainly disclosed? The conduct of the brethren who insisted on the necessity of circumcision, seemed to Peter unworthy of those who reverently believed God, and as an approach to levity. || *To put a yoke.* The meaning of the

our fathers nor we were able to bear?

apostle would be rendered more clear, should we translate thus—*By putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples*; as if he had said, By insisting on the necessity of circumcision to the Gentile converts, and subjecting them to the Mosaic law, you put matters in the very position in which they would have been, had not God disclosed his will; you place the Gentiles, as it were, under the Mosaic yoke; and thus you create an occasion for requiring a new and more decided manifestation of his will that the yoke be removed, or rather be not placed on the necks of Gentile believers. The Mosaic law is denominated *a yoke*, on account of the burdensome rites and ceremonies which it imposed. Compare v. 28. In Gal. 5: 1, the apostle calls the Mosaic law *a yoke of bondage*, in contrast with the spiritual liberty which characterizes the gospel. || *Which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear*; that is, to bear easily. The Mosaic law entered so much into particulars, and prescribed so many ceremonies which could be acceptably performed only in the appointed manner, and which affected almost all the circumstances of life, that it occasioned frequent uneasiness. It was, to a very great extent, an outward service, fitted rather for an inferior state of human improvement than for an elevated condition of our race. Such it was designed by its divine author to be, as preparatory to the spiritual religion of Christ. And it was well fitted to be introductory to the Messiah's religion; a religion, which consists not in outward observances, nor depends on forms and ceremonies, but consists eminently in righteousness, in the soul's conformity to the will of God. Judaism was a yoke of bondage; and as God had evidently removed the yoke, by the approving testimony which he had borne to the converted Gentiles, why should there be a desire to put it on the necks of the new disciples, to see whether

11 But we believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Bar-

God would by a more satisfactory method show his pleasure that it should be removed?

11. *But we believe, &c.* The apostle Peter presented still another consideration; namely, that to Jews, as well as to Gentiles, salvation could come only through the unmerited favor of Jesus Christ. No outward obedience of *Jews* could purchase for them salvation. *Jews*, as well as Gentiles, were wholly dependent on the grace of Christ. It would be allowed, that if Gentiles were saved, their salvation would be an act of mere grace; so, says the apostle, are the *Jews* also to be saved. And since, in regard to salvation, there is no demand for merit on the part of any who are to be saved, the ground on which circumcision was pleaded for did not exist. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; we *Jews*, as well as Gentiles, must be saved by the grace of Christ. Why, then, impose on them the Mosaic law? Thus Peter clearly showed himself decidedly unfavorable to considering the Mosaic law as binding on the Gentile converts to Christianity. It is interesting to notice the decided manner in which Peter here expressed himself; since at Antioch, on an occasion a few years previous (according to the opinion of some writers), though after the conversion of Cornelius, he had subjected himself to the pointed rebuke of the apostle Paul for wavering from right practice in regard to this matter, and refusing, through fear of the Jewish Christians, to eat with the Gentiles. See Gal. 2: 11, 12. The time when Peter drew on himself this rebuke, is thought by some writers to have been just after his deliverance from prison in Jerusalem (twelfth chapter), and his departure from that city. 12: 17. They suppose

nabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, say-

him to have gone to Antioch; and the event referred to, to have occurred before the tour of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch. It is difficult, however, to fix the date of this event; and other writers believe that Peter's wavering took place even after the decision adopted at Jerusalem.—On the thought presented by the apostle, that our salvation is altogether an act of divine grace, and does not result at all from human merit, see Rom. 3: 9, 22, 23, 29, 30. Gal. 2: 16. Eph. 2: 8—10.

12. *Then all the multitude kept silence, &c.* Others were present besides the apostles and elders. The subject was one of so great interest, that all, probably, gave their attendance, whose engagements would permit them, or who could find admission. Especially would those be present, who had been active in disseminating their views as to the necessity of circumcision. After Peter's address, a pause probably ensued. The address carried conviction, no doubt, to many, or at least produced a state of mind eminently favorable to a settlement of the question. The truly evangelical character of the sentiments he expressed, is manifest. The pause which ensued gave Paul and Barnabas an opportunity to recount the events of their recent tour, and the many evidences that God had been with them. They probably related the manner in which they conducted towards the believing Gentiles; and their account would confirm the sentiments expressed by Peter. The fact that God wrought miracles by them on their tour, was a divine testimony to the correctness of their proceedings. The whole weight of what Paul and Barnabas said was in favor of Peter's sentiments.

13. *James*; that is, James the less, as distinguished from the James

ing, Men and brethren, hearken unto me.

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and

whom Herod the king had put to death. See on 12:17.

14. *Simeon*; another form of the name *Simon*. It is Peter who is here meant, Simon Peter, who had been addressing the assembly. The same mode of spelling the name, as is here employed by Luke, occurs in the original Greek of 2 Pet. 1:1. || *How God at the first*; when he first made known his will, that Gentiles should receive the blessings of the gospel. See the tenth chapter of this book. || *Did visit the Gentiles*; showed favor to the Gentiles. Speaking after the manner of men, God came down to behold their condition and wants, and to bestow on them his favor. In the same manner, God is said, in Luke 1:68, to have "visited and redeemed his people" Israel. || *A people for his name*; a people to bear his name, to be called a people of God. The distinction of being God's people was not to be always confined to the Jews; but, in a far higher sense than that in which the name belonged to the Jewish nation, it was to be given to another company, selected from among the Gentiles; namely, to the followers of Christ.

15. *To this agree the words of the prophets*. Several of the prophets had made known God's purpose to favor the Gentiles, and to extend to them the blessings which the promised Saviour was to bestow. Compare Is. 2:2—4. 49:6. Micah 4:1—4. || *As it is written*. The apostle proceeds to specify one of the passages in which the Gentiles were mentioned as future partakers of the Lord's favor. The passage occurs in Amos 9:11, 12. The prophet's

will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

sentiments are quoted by the apostle, without retaining, precisely, his language.

16. *After this*. The prophet Amos had been predicting the overthrow of the Jewish kingdom. But in the verses here quoted, he also foretold that the calamities which the kingdom was to suffer, would be followed by a restoration of prosperity. || *I will—build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down*. The tabernacle of David here signifies the habitation, or house, of David; and David's dwelling, or palace, is used figuratively for the Jewish kingdom, David being the first in the Jewish royal family. By the figure of a palace fallen to ruins, the devastated state of the kingdom is represented. The ruins were, however, to be repaired; and prosperity was to succeed.

17. *The residue of men*; the remaining nations, others besides the Jews. || *And all the Gentiles*; or, even all the Gentiles, these words being explanatory of the term, *the residue of men*. || *Upon whom my name is called*; who are, or, rather, who shall be, called after my name; that is, called the Lord's people. The present is here used for the future. The prophet foresaw the time when the favor of being the Lord's people would not be restricted to the Jewish nation, but would be extended also to the Gentiles. This would be one of the results that would flow from the restoration of prosperity to the kingdom of David. The prosperity to be bestowed was to come in the Messiah's days, and would consist in spiritual blessings, in the prevalence of true religion. A kingdom of right-

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is,

eousness would be established by the Messiah; and Gentiles would seek the Lord, and become his people, through the influence of the Messiah's reign.

18. *Known unto God are all his works, &c.* The declarations of prophecy made it evident, that God had designed to confer on Gentiles the blessings of the Messiah's reign. His arrangements are always formed with perfect knowledge, reaching from the beginning; and he immutably adheres to the purposes which he has formed. The fact, then, of Gentiles sharing in the blessings of the gospel, was appointed by him from the beginning, and was, therefore, only the accomplishment of what he had always designed. It was new and unexpected to the Jews, but not to God. As God is unchangeable, this event ought to have been expected, because it was predicted by inspired prophets; and it ought to be acknowledged as in accordance with the design of God from eternity. || *From the beginning of the world; literally, from eternity.*

19. *My sentence; my judgment.* || *That we trouble not them, &c.*; that is, by imposing on them the burdensome ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Thus the opinion of James accorded with that of Peter in considering circumcision as not binding on the Gentile Christians. The apostles were, doubtless, all of one mind in regard to the question at issue. Though they were inspired men, yet their inspiration was perfectly consistent with mutual consultation; and over their consultations the Holy Spirit would so preside as to lead them to a right result, both on the main question, and on connected topics, in which propriety, rather than simple duty, was involved.

20. *But that we write unto them.* The circumstances of the case were

that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them

such as required, in the opinion of James, some special instructions to the converted Gentiles. If the broad ground, without limitation, were taken, that the Mosaic law need not be observed by Gentile Christians, they might do some things that would be peculiarly and justly offensive to the Jewish Christians, and thus prevent a kind and fraternal blending together of these two classes into one body; and the Jewish Christians, who had been educated to so great a reverence for Moses, might feel that too little respect was paid to him, and might even think that the demands on Gentile Christians for purity of life, were less extensive and less binding than on Jews under the Mosaic law. He therefore thought that instructions ought to be sent forth from the assembly then convened, enjoining on the converts from heathenism abstinen^ece from certain practices which were frequent among the Gentiles, and which, either from the nature of the practices, or from the circumstances of the times, or from both combined, ought carefully to be avoided by Christians. || *That they abstain from pollutions of idols; or, as appears from v. 29, meats offered to idols.* Under this term, *pollutions of idols*, were included those portions of animals offered in sacrifice to an idol, which were used by the offerers in making a feast, either in the idol's temple or in their own houses, in honor of the idol, and to which feast friends of the offerers were invited. The term included also those pieces which were sold in the markets, as picces of sacred meat. The meat of an animal which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol, was to a Jew an abomination; the use of it was regarded as polluting, because it was regarded by the heathen as consecrated to an idol, and therefore, in their view, it con-

that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and

nected the partaker with idolatry. And idolatry was felt by Jews to be so abhorrent to God, and so contrary to the Mosaic law, that the slightest approach to an act which would seem to pay honor to an idol was looked upon with dread. || *From fornication.* This crime was so extremely common among the Gentiles, and was generally regarded by them with so little disapprobation, — was, indeed, viewed by so many as not criminal at all, — their very religions even permitting and encouraging it, — that a special injunction was needed on the converted Gentiles to abstain from it. The opinions of the Jews were far more elevated on this subject than those of the Gentiles, as the Mosaic law so expressly forbade crimes of this nature. The extreme commonness of it among the Gentiles, and the prevalent laxity of views concerning it, would naturally make the Jews very liable to suspect the Gentiles of being defiled by it, and produce an unwillingness to associate familiarly with them, even should they profess to be Christians, unless there was some special guard in respect to this sin. While this sin was by no means to be placed on the same footing with the other things mentioned, as being in any respect and in any circumstances a matter of indifference, it might still be mentioned in connection with such things, on the ground that a direct and special injunction to avoid it was peculiarly needed by the circumstances of the times.

|| *From things strangled, and from blood.* The flesh of animals that had died, or been put to death without the shedding of their blood, was expressly forbidden to the Jews, as food, as was also the use of blood for food. They were led to cherish an abhorrence of such articles of food, because *blood* had so many sacred associations in their minds. The blood of an animal was called, in their Scriptures, *its life*, and must

from things strangled, and *from* blood.

not, therefore, be treated lightly. It was by blood, too, that, in their sacrifices, atonement was made; and to employ blood for food would have been to them an unspeakable profanation. See Lev. 17:10—15. A due regard to the conscientious feelings of Jews would require the Gentile converts to abstain from the flesh of strangled animals, and from blood, as articles of food. Whether Gentiles could innocently eat such food or not, was not the question; but what was the dictate of propriety and fraternal duty, on the part of Gentile Christians, in view of *all circumstances*? Now, while the Jews had been religiously accustomed to abstain from such articles of food, the use of them was habitual and prevalent among the Gentiles; and many of their practices in preparing such articles of food could not but be highly disgusting, as well as apparently criminal, to persons who had been accustomed to more cleanly and refined practices, and who had also associated with their articles of food, and manner of dressing them, the thought of religious obedience to God. We can scarcely wonder at the strenuous feelings of the Jews on this subject, even apart from strictly religious considerations, when we reflect that, among the Gentiles, it was very common, as Bloomfield remarks, “to enclose the carcass of the animal (so killed that the blood should remain in it) in an oven, or deep stewing-vessel, and thus cook it in its own vapor or steam.”

Such were the prohibitions which the apostle James recommended in regard to the Gentile Christians. They were needed on the two grounds of morality and of reasonable accommodation to the views and feelings of the Jewish Christians. First: *Abstaining from fornication* was certainly required on account of the nature of the offence; for at all times, and in all cases, it is a violation of God’s law. But, as has already been stated, the

circumstances of the times in Gentile nations when the gospel began to be introduced among them, furnished an additional reason for its prohibition, and rendered necessary to converted Gentiles a very special caution against it. It was necessary, again, not only in order to satisfy Jewish Christians, but to make an instant and an everlasting separation on this point of morality between Christians and other men. Secondly: *Abstaining from meats offered to idols* had respect not so much to the *nature* of the deed contemplated, when viewed by itself, as to the moral impression concerning it in the mind of a person who should eat such meats, and the impression which the use of such food might make on the minds of others. This matter is fully discussed by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 10: 19—33; and the apostle's sentiments may be briefly stated, as follows—Since an idol (or heathen god) is nothing, a mere creature of the imagination, the meat is, in reality, nowise affected by its being offered to an idol. Whoever views the matter in that light, may partake of such meat without injury to his conscience. But if a person has not arrived to such clearness of views, and is still somewhat beclouded in his mind as to the real existence of a heathen deity, and therefore the eating of meat offered to an idol would be, in his mind, an acknowledgment of regard for the idol, he ought to abstain. So if a person, invited to a feast, makes no inquiry, or receives no information, in regard to the meat set before him, whether or not it had been offered up to an idol, he may partake of it without doing wrong. But if he is informed that it has been offered up to an idol, and that the feast is in honor of that idol, then he ought to abstain, lest he should confirm idolaters in their wicked practices, and give occasion of harm to some Christian brother's conscience and spiritual welfare. Such were the apostle's views; and they show that this prohibition had respect to the circumstances of the times, in their bearing both on idolatrous Gen-

tiles and on Christian converts, Jewish as well as Gentile. And such were the circumstances of the times, that the partaking of food which had been offered to an idol, with knowledge that it had been thus offered, could hardly fail to be regarded as favoring idolatry. Thirdly: *Abstaining from things strangled, and from blood*, as articles of food, appears to have had principal respect to the feelings of the Jewish Christians; for our Lord distinctly taught, in Mark 7: 18—23, that a man is not defiled by that *which entereth into him*—by that which he eats or drinks. What he eats does not make him either holy or unholy; it affects not his heart, or moral character. It is connected with the body, not with the soul. The reasons for the Jews' being prohibited to use such articles, were not felt among other people; and such food was to be avoided even by the *Jews*, rather because it was *prohibited*, than because the use of it was *sinful in itself*, and in all circumstances. But though this prohibition, as proposed by James, had special respect to the feelings of the Jews, and was not demanded on strictly moral grounds, as necessary to a person's being free from guilt in the sight of God, yet it is doubtless true, that where there is refinement of feeling, and where the sensibilities have not become blunted, men instinctively, as it were, avoid the use of animals for food which have died without losing their blood. The thought of animals that have thus died being unsuitable for food, gathers strength, too, from the more speedy corruption which takes place in such bodies. God appears, also, to have originally prohibited men from using blood as an article of food. See Gen. 9: 4—“Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” This prohibition, however, was probably made, not because the use of blood would be in itself, and directly, a *moral* wrong, necessarily defiling the conscience, but because it would tend to cherish certain propensities and traits of character, that are, to say the

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach

least, unfavorable to morality. The use of blood for food cherishes cruelty, revenge, and all the ferocious passions, either by some influence on men's animal nature, or by making them familiar with thoughts and practices which tend to harden the heart. Blood, therefore, was originally prohibited for this, among other reasons, that the habitual use of it would be at variance with the harmony and the ultimate design of that system which God has established for man on earth; not that the use of it, in every case and in all circumstances, would be sinful, or would necessarily pollute the conscience. This original prohibition ought, however, to regulate the general conduct of men in all ages; for the Creator clearly designed that men should not live on the blood of animals. The subject properly belongs to the class of matters which are to be considered as *wrong*, that is, as not being accordant with the human system, and as being inconsistent with the highest improvement, both personal and social, but which cannot be declared, in every individual case, and in all circumstances, without exception, really *sinful*.

It is worthy of distinct notice, that the prohibitions here recommended, in respect to Gentile converts to Christianity, are substantially such as were required by Jews from Gentiles who became proselytes to their religion so far as to unite externally with them, but who did not so fully adopt the Jewish religion as to receive the rite of circumcision. Such were called *proselytes of the gate*. And it may have been one part of the apostle James's purpose, to have it made evident and well known, that no person could become connected with the Christian church from among the Gentiles, without at least as much care against prevailing enormities and unworthy practices, as was required of Gentiles who sought a union with the Jewish community. The minds

him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

of Jewish Christians would seem to require, at least, as much as this.

21. *For Moses, &c.* The apostle James proceeded to state the reason on which his advice was grounded. In all the cities of the civilized world, Jews had taken up their residence, and established weekly public worship in their synagogues. The books of Moses were regularly read through, by sections, at their public worship; so that the minds of the Jews were deeply imbued with the sentiments inculcated by Moses, and their views and feelings were extensively regulated by his instructions. It would be highly proper, then, to take into account the reverence which they had been accustomed to cherish for Moses, that their lawgiver, so eminently honored of God, should not seem now to be slighted. Apparent disesteem for Moses would unfavorably affect the Jewish mind, and be an obstacle in the way of Jewish Christians' admitting converted Gentiles into fellowship with them. It would also hinder Jews who had not become Christians, from examining with candor the claims of the gospel. There ought, then, to be at least so much respect paid to the law of Moses, as to prohibit the converted Gentiles from the practices which the apostle had mentioned—practices which the Jews had always been accustomed to hold in abhorrence. || *Of old time.* The sentiments of respect for Moses, among the Jews, were not of recent origin. They had come down through successive generations, and had so moulded the Jewish mind, that wisdom required a compliance, on the part of Gentile converts, with these sentiments, so far, at least, as the distinctive principles of the gospel would admit. Those principles were not abandoned, nor endangered; while yet a spirit of accommodation to the Jews was advised. || *Them that preach him;* those that publicly proclaim his law; namely, by reading in the synagogues the books of Moses.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

23 And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles, and elders, and brethren, *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us, have troubled you with words,

22. *With the whole church.* The private members of the church united in the decision with the apostles and elders; so that the decision went forth from the church at Jerusalem, sanctioned by apostolical authority and the concurrence of that body, to which a special respect would be shown by the followers of Christ. In what manner the voice of "the whole church" was obtained,— whether all the believers assembled together, or a smaller portion met as representatives of the whole,— we are not informed. The persecution which arose after Stephen's martyrdom, caused a large number of Christians to leave Jerusalem, and the number resident in the city at the time here spoken of, might not have been too large to assemble together. But it was not the purpose of the sacred writer to inform us of such particulars.

It is worthy of distinct notice, that in this important council at Jerusalem, Peter possessed no more influence, or authority, than James. Indeed, the matter was eventually settled in accordance with the prudential suggestions of James, as well as in accordance with Peter's view of the main question. This shows that the papal notion of Peter's having been appointed to a special authority among his colleagues, on which notion the authority of the pope of Rome, as pretended successor to Peter, is made to rest, was unknown in the prim-

subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law*; to whom we gave no such commandment:

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul:

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon

itive age. Indeed, after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the full illumination of the apostles' minds, the thought of preëminence of any one of them over another never, probably, occurred to them. They were all brethren; all, the Lord's servants, appointed for mutual counsel and coöperation, and delighting in one another's success as ministers of the Lord Jesus. || *Silas*; called *Silvanus* in the Epistles. See 2 Cor. 1: 19. 1 Thess. 1: 1. 1 Pet. 5: 12. *Silas* is a contraction of the full name. Both Judas and Silas were Christian teachers. See v. 32.

23. *Cilicia*; the province of Asia Minor lying west of Syria. The directions sent forth by this council at Jerusalem were designed, of course, for general application, wherever converted Gentiles should be found; but the three names, Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, were expressly mentioned, because the difficulty, to which the directions had reference, had been chiefly felt in those places.

24. *Certain which went out from us.* See v. 1. || *Subverting your souls*; disturbing your minds, and unsettling them from the truth.

26. *Men that have hazarded their lives.* Compare 13: 50. 14: 19.

28. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost.* The Holy Spirit directed "the apostles, and elders, and brethren" (v. 23), to a right decision. Divine aid had been promised to the

you no greater burden than these necessary things;

29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and

apostles in conducting the affairs of the church; and the direction which the minds of the brethren took, showed the presiding influence of the Spirit. Compare Matt. 18: 20. John 16: 13. || *These necessary things*; necessary, partly from the nature of the things themselves, and partly from existing circumstances; necessary, for avoiding occasions of suspicion and jealousy, and for producing permanent union between Jewish believers and believers from among the Gentiles.

29. *Meats offered to idols*; called in v. 20, *pollutions of idols*.

30. *The multitude*; the company of Christians, the church.

31. *For the consolation*. Some translate, *for the instruction*. The epistle was one both of instruction and of consolation. It instructed the Jewish believers as to what was to be required of Gentile believers; and Gentile believers, in what points they ought to consult the views and feelings of their Jewish brethren. It must have given consolation to considerate Jews, as putting to rest a question of some practical difficulty; and to Gentiles, as relieving them from a burden of ceremonial observances. And all could not but rejoice in the basis which it presented for Christian union.

32. *Being prophets also themselves*; religious teachers. See on 13: 1. || *Exhorted the brethren*. They instructed the brethren, both in Christian doctrine generally, and respecting the directions which they had brought from Jerusalem in regard to the law of Moses. The epistle from Jerusalem was brief; and there would be

when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle.

31 *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*.

room for explanations. The opportunity was a favorable one, too, for confirming the brethren in their attachment to Christ, and in their mutual Christian affection.

REMARK. The manner in which this early difficulty respecting circumcision was settled, is highly interesting, not only on account of the subject itself, and of the spirit of conciliation and concord which it manifested, but also as having a bearing on the subject of Christian baptism. It has been very earnestly maintained, that baptism under the gospel is a substitute for circumcision under the law of Moses, in such a sense as to require the infants of Christians to be now baptized, as formerly the infants of Jews were circumcised. This has been regarded as a powerful argument for administering baptism to the infants of believing parents. But the account in this chapter shows that the apostles held no such opinion respecting baptism. For, if they had, the reply, that baptism had been substituted for circumcision, that it was in reality the same ordinance under a different form, and consequently that the ancient rite was only altered, would have been a most natural, and, indeed, an unavoidable one, and satisfactory to those who contended for the necessity of circumcision to Christians. But, clearly, the ground which the apostles took was, that circumcision and the other rites of the Jewish law were not to be enjoined on Christians; for now a new dispensation was introduced, with its appropriate ordinances. Some resemblance may, indeed, be

33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding, it pleased Silas to abide there still.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren, in

perceived between the ordinances of the old dispensation and those of the new; yet those of the latter are not a substitute for those of the former, in any such sense as to warrant the inference that, because infants were formerly circumcised, they ought now to be baptized. The argument would prove too much, and might, if valid in this application, be still further legitimately extended, greatly to the injury of the gospel. There is a striking resemblance between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ, in the following particular — He that was a Jew, whether by birth, or by adopting in full the Jewish religion, was to be circumcised: so, he that is a Christian, by a new spiritual birth, ought to be baptized.

33. *They were let go in peace.* In taking leave of a person, the customary form of expression was, Peace be with you, as expressing good wishes, and imploring a divine blessing. Judas and Silas were taken leave of with the customary expressions of good-will.

34. *It pleased Silas, &c.* Silas, however, though intending at that time to return to Jerusalem, concluded to remain a while longer in Antioch. He had, in all probability, become strongly attached to the apostle Paul, and wished still longer to enjoy his society. He certainly became, from this date, a most faithful companion and friend of the apostle. See verse 40th; also chapter 16th.

every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they de-

See, also, 2 Cor. 1:19. 1 Thess. 1:1. 2 Thess. 1:1.

36. *How they do;* in regard, of course, to their spiritual state.

37. *Barnabas determined to take with them John, &c.* John, surnamed Mark (12:12, 25), was a nephew of Barnabas (see Col. 4:10); and this circumstance, probably, influenced Barnabas in determining to take him.

38. *But Paul thought not good to take him, &c.* During the former tour of Paul and Barnabas, Mark, who set out with them as their attendant, left them at Perga in Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem. Paul was dissatisfied with the conduct of Mark in thus leaving them; and he now preferred a different associate. Though he was unfavorably impressed in regard to Mark, he afterwards became satisfied as to his being a truly pious and valuable man, and gladly welcomed him to his renewed confidence, and took occasion to speak favorably of him to others. See on 13:13.

39. *The contention was so sharp, &c.* The difference of opinion led to some warmth of feeling, of an unpleasant character, though of short duration. The occurrence was overruled for good, by divine providence, in setting on foot two evangelical tours, instead of one. Paul and Barnabas, doubtless, amicably agreed to go different ways, and take different companions. From the manner in which the apostle Paul speaks of Barnabas in 1 Cor. 9:6, we may

parted asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

CHAPTER XVI.

1 Paul having circumcised Timothy, 7 and being called by the Spirit from one country

conclude, as well as from the character of the two men, that their friendship for one another was not materially affected by this unpleasant collision. They loved one another, and the cause of their common Master, too well to indulge in bickerings, and to try to weaken each other's hands. 'Not ignorant of the devices of Satan' (2 Cor. 2: 11), they closed their hearts against a spirit of alienation; and if the "sharp contention" made an approach to anger, they doubtless did not let the sun go down upon their wrath. Eph. 4: 26. || *Sailed unto Cyprus.* The island of Cyprus (13: 4) was, as we learn from 4: 36, the birthplace, or the former residence, of Barnabas. It was natural that he should feel a special interest in its spiritual concerns. This is the last notice taken of Barnabas by the sacred historian. According to the statements of some early ecclesiastical writers, he travelled very extensively, disseminating the gospel. In the latter period of his life, it is said, he returned to Cyprus, and there suffered a martyr's death, being stoned in Salamis, the chief city of Cyprus, by some Syrian Jews.

40. *Being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God;* being recommended to the favor of God for providential protection, and for the aid of the Holy Spirit.—Let us not fail to imitate the interest which the brethren in Antioch took in the evangelical tours of the apostle. Let us, in like manner, perpetually commend to the divine favor the faithful mis-

to another, 14 converteth Lydia, 16 casteth out a spirit of divination. 19 For which cause he and Silas are whipped and imprisoned. 26 The prison doors are opened. 31 The jailer is converted, 37 and they are delivered.

THEN came he to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek:

2 Which was well reported of

sionaries who have gone forth from among us to the regions of spiritual death. Compare 3 John, verses 5—8.

41. *And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches;* strengthening the churches in their Christian faith and hope, and in their acceptance of the decision which had been formed in Jerusalem, concerning the law of Moses. Thus commenced the apostle's second evangelical tour.

CHAPTER XVI.

At the close of the fifteenth chapter, we read of Paul's setting out with Silas on his second tour, and of his passing through Syria and Cilicia. Luke now proceeds to a particular account of the further prosecution of this journey.

1. *Derbe and Lystra;* cities of the province Lycaonia, which had before been visited by Paul and Barnabas. See 14: 6. || *Timothaeus;* Timothy, to whom the apostle afterwards wrote two epistles. || *Which was a Jewess, and believed.* Timothy's mother was a Jewess, and she had become a Christian. Her name was Eunice. 2 Tim. 1: 5. || *His father was a Greek;* a Gentile, and, as it would seem, not a proselyte to the Jewish religion. Females among the Jews were allowed by custom, if not by the law, to marry Gentile husbands, as in the case of queen Esther; though Jewish men were not allowed to marry heathen wives. Ezra, 9th chapter.

2. *Which was well reported of;* was

by the brethren that were at Lysstra and Iconium.

3 *Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his*

*held in high esteem, and well spoken of. The incidental notices of Timothy's character, in the two epistles addressed to him, show that he possessed uncommon excellence. In 1 Tim. 6: 11, 12, the apostle applies to him the epithet *man of God*, and speaks of his irreproachable profession of piety. In 2 Tim. 1: 5, and 3: 14, 15, he mentions his unfeigned piety, and his exemplary attainments in religious knowledge. He had been carefully instructed in the word of God from his childhood, and enjoyed the guidance and care of a mother and a grandmother (2 Tim. 1: 5), both of whom were sincerely pious. A happy illustration of Prov. 22: 6—“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

3. *Him would Paul have to go forth with him; as an associate and assistant. || Circumcised him, because of the Jews, &c.* The apostle would by no means have done this as a *personal religious duty*, or on the principle of its being a part of *obedience to God*; because circumcision was no longer obligatory. Still, since he was wishing to spread the gospel among Jews as well as Gentiles, since Timothy also was to be employed in company with him, as a preacher of the gospel, and since unconverted Jews would at once become prejudiced against both him and Timothy if a total neglect of a rite which they so highly regarded was thus directly encouraged,—it was the dictate of prudence that there should be no occasion of ill-will. In his view, and in that of Timothy, the ancient Jewish rite was a matter of entire indifference. It might be performed, or it might be neglected. But the neglect of it, in the present instance, would prevent their reception among the

father was a Greek:

4 *And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.*

5 *And so were the churches es-*

Jews, while yet their compliance with the Jewish prejudice would not injure the cause of the gospel, and could not, in this case, be an infringement on Christian liberty. The apostle therefore judged it expedient to accommodate himself to the feelings of the Jews. Thus to the Jews he would become a Jew, and make himself all things to all men, that he might save some. 1 Cor. 9: 20—22. That his conduct, on this occasion, was an instance of mere accommodation to Jewish prejudices, and did not involve any departure from his previous views of Christian duty and Christian liberty, appears from the fact that, when some brethren, who were tenacious of the Jewish law as still binding on Christians, required him to consent that Titus, who was a Gentile Christian, should be circumcised, he would not yield for a moment; because, in such a case, compliance would have been a renunciation of Christian principle, and an acknowledgment of subjection to the Mosaic law. See Gal. 2: 3—5. || They knew all that his father was a Greek; a Gentile, and that therefore Timothy had not been circumcised in his infancy. If the father withheld his consent, the Jewish mother was considered as released from the obligation of having her son circumcised. When Timothy afterwards became a Christian, his views of Christian duty were like those of the apostle; he saw that the Jewish rite was not binding on Christians, and so neglected it.

4. *The decrees—that were ordained, &c.; the decisions formed at Jerusalem, as related in the fifteenth chapter.*

5. *So were the churches established, &c.* Compare 2: 47. 9: 31. The

tablished in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 Now, when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia;

blessing of God evidently followed the measures which had been adopted at Jerusalem. They operated favorably as to the harmony and stability of the churches, and the increase of converts.

6. *Phrygia* — *Galatia*; provinces in Asia Minor. || *Were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.* In what manner the Spirit of God signified his will on this occasion, cannot be decided. Suffice it to say that, in some way, the divine pleasure was made known, so as to leave no doubt on the apostle's mind. Circumstances may have been such, in divine providence, as to occasion hinderances beyond the apostle's control; or such impressions may have been made on his mind, in answer to prayer, and in his employing other methods of obtaining divine direction, as clearly showed him that duty led him elsewhere. No reasons are even hinted, by the sacred writer, for the Lord's declining to employ the apostle in further spreading the gospel in these regions. The most obvious thought which occurs is, that the Lord, as would appear from the subsequent history, designed the services of Paul for more remote regions, and for countries where a man of his character would be eminently needed for spreading the gospel, and where, of course, he could be employed more advantageously than some other ministers. As the gospel was now established at so many points in Asia Minor, and a Christian influence would go forth from all those points, and other ministers of the gospel would doubtless traverse these regions, the Lord appears to have destined Paul to convey the gospel into Europe. The character of Paul made him a more suitable instrument than some others would have been,

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

8 And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul

for the Spirit to employ in preaching the gospel in regions nearer the great centres of literary and civil influence. Such was the disposal which God made of Paul; and authentic records of ancient times show, that the greater part of the regions named in this verse and the following as forbidden ground to Paul, were inhabited by people less refined and less influential than those among whom the Spirit and the providence of God led him. || *Asia.* This word does not here signify the whole of Asia Minor, but is used in its most restricted sense, as designating Ionia, which was called Proconsular Asia, as being under the government of a Roman proconsul. This district, named Asia, contained the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia. The city of Ephesus was its capital. See on the word *Asia*, in 2: 9.

7. *Mysia* — *Bithynia*; neighboring provinces in this same region. || *They assayed*; they made an attempt.

8. *Troas*; a maritime city on the coast of the Egean sea. It was named Troas, because it was near the place where Troy once stood, so renowned in ancient history. It was also named Alexandria, in honor of Alexander the Great, and was distinguished from Alexandria in Egypt by being called Alexandria Troas. The Egean sea, which was also anciently called the Hellespont, and is now called the Archipelago, separates the part of Asia where Paul then was from the south of Europe.

9. *And a vision appeared*, &c. The will of God now became manifest. As on some other occasions of disclosing his will to men (10: 3, 17, 19), so now, God ordered a supernatural appearance to present itself to Paul, probably in a dream, as in Matt. 1: 20. 2: 19, with a pressing entreaty

in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering, that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

for his services. || *Macedonia*; a large region of Europe, north of ancient Greece. Macedonia was the original kingdom of Philip, and of Alexander the Great, his son. It became universally distinguished by the victories of Alexander. In process of time, the country fell into the power of the Romans; and in the time of the apostles it was a part of the Roman empire. || *Come over into Macedonia*. A glance at the map shows that from Troas, Paul would have to *pass over*, or cross, the Egean sea, to enter Macedonia. || *Help us*; help us in our ignorant and perishing condition; come, teach us the way of eternal life. What an affecting request to an apostle of the Lord Jesus!

10. *We endeavored*. Luke, the writer of the Acts, here shows that he was with Paul and his company. He had probably joined the apostle a short time before. || *Assuredly gathering, &c.* To the apostle's mind, recalling the circumstances that had hindered his preaching in the region through which he had recently passed, there was no doubt that the finger of God was directing him to Macedonia.

11. *Samothracia*; a small island in the Egean sea, directly on the way from Troas to Macedonia. One of its more ancient names was Samos; but in order to distinguish it from another Samos, in the Ionian sea, it was called by the compound name Samothracia, or Samos of Thrace, it being not far from the country of Thrace. || *Neapolis*; a seaport in Macedonia, now called Napoli.

12. *Philippi*; a city a short distance west of Neapolis, anciently named Datos, and afterwards Cren-

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went

ides. It was subsequently named Philippi, in honor of Philip of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. Philip had repaired and fortified the city. || *Which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia*. Macedonia had been divided by the Roman general, Emilius Paulus, into four parts, to the first of which Philippi belonged. It was not the capital city of this part, and therefore not properly *the* chief city; but, in strict accordance with the original Greek of this passage, *a* chief city, one of the most distinguished, and having, perhaps, some peculiar civil privileges. Amphipolis was, in reality, the capital of that district. || *A colony*. A Roman colony was a city, or district of country, which Roman citizens were sent to inhabit. Colonies were of several kinds, differing in the privileges which were conferred on them. The first in rank were called *Roman*, as the colonists enjoyed all the private rights of Roman citizens. The next in order were called *Latin*, with a less amount of privileges. The third were called *Italian*, and were favored at least with exemption from taxes. There were also *military colonies*, established to reward veteran soldiers. To which class Philippi belonged, we have not the means of determining. It appears, however, from ancient documents, that Julius Cesar had bestowed on Philippi the dignity and privileges of a Roman colony; perhaps in connection with settling there a company of Romans. Augustus Cesar had also settled a company of Romans in that city, and confirmed and increased the privileges of the colony. The city was consequently a place of celebrity.

out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made ; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 And a certain woman named

It was also distinguished in Roman history, as the place where two very important battles had been fought. In its vicinity were also gold and silver mines.

13. *And on the sabbath* ; the sabbath of the Jews. || *By a river side, where prayer, &c.* When there was not a synagogue in a city, in consequence of the small number of Jewish inhabitants, or of prohibition by the magistrates, it was customary for the Jews to consecrate to religious purposes a spot outside of the city, and near to the sea, or to some stream, for the convenience of ceremonial purification ; as it was their practice to wash the hands before prayer. Sometimes, a small house was erected for accommodating those who wished to repair to the place for prayer ; at other times, a grove, or a piece of shrubbery, or the space around a shady tree, was thus employed. A place, thus set apart for religious purposes, was generally called by the same word which in Greek means *prayer*, namely, *proseucha*. Some writers translate, accordingly, the clause, *where prayer was wont to be made*, thus — *where, according to custom, was a proseucha*, or place of prayer. Our version, however, well expresses the idea of the sacred writer. The notices respecting Philippi in works on ancient geography, are not sufficiently minute to enable us to determine the name of the river, or stream, which is here spoken of. It is generally believed to have been a rivulet which emptied into the river Strymon. The maps of the country make this rather doubtful. At the same time, ancient authorities make it evident that there was a large number of streams in the vicinity of this city. Indeed, it was on account of there being in the vicinity many springs, or fountains, that the city once bore the Greek

Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us : whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

name *Crenides*. || *Spake unto the women which resorted thither.* It would seem that on this occasion only women were present. In the Jewish synagogues, it was customary for the men and the women to occupy different parts of the house during the worship ; but probably in the places for prayer outside of the cities, each sex had its own appropriate hours for prayer.

14. *Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira.* The province named Lydia, in Asia Minor, of which Thyatira was a distinguished city, on the confines of Lydia and Mysia, was celebrated for the art of purple dyeing, and for the manufacture of purple garments. The person here mentioned, Lydia, was a resident of Thyatira, but, at the time here spoken of, was sojourning at Philippi on business, as a dealer in purple garments. Thyatira was afterwards the seat of an important Christian church. Rev. 1 : 11. 2 : 18, 24. || *Which worshipped God.* This expression, frequently employed to denote a class of proselytes to the Jewish religion, shows that Lydia, a Gentile by birth, had adopted the Jewish religion.

|| *Whose heart the Lord opened.* A person's heart is said to be closed up against instruction, when he is unwilling to hear it, or to obey it. Lydia was particularly inclined to hear and to receive the apostle's instructions. Her heart was open to admit the truth. This well-disposed state of the heart is here traced to the Lord's influence. Compare Matt. 11 : 25—27. 1 Cor. 3 : 6, 7. Ezek. 36 : 26, 27. The sacred writer's language, too, in this place, shows the entire harmony between the influence which the Lord exerts on men's hearts, and their voluntary attention to the subject of religion. Lydia attended to Paul's instructions.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there: And she constrained us.

She was neither indifferent to them, nor were they forced upon her. We see, too, how necessary is a personal attention to the subject of religion. She felt that she had a personal interest in Paul's instructions, and that they must not be slighted. Let no one fail to regard religion as an indispensable personal concern. And wherever there is a disposition to seek the Lord, and to receive his truth, let the humble and grateful acknowledgment be made, that it is the Lord who has opened the heart.

15. *She was baptized, and her household.* Both Lydia and all who composed her family, received the truth which Paul presented. Her family consisted, doubtless, of persons in her employ.—The mention of Lydia's household, or family, has led some to consider this an instance in which little children were baptized, in consequence of their parent's having become a believer; and it has consequently been regarded as supporting the practice of infant baptism. But a slight attention to the account shows that such a use of the passage is quite unwarrantable. No hint is given that Lydia had a husband or children. But even if she had, there is no reason to suppose they were then with her; she was at a long distance from home, nearly three hundred miles according to the usual computation, and on a trading journey. She was temporarily in a foreign city, pursuing her traffic. Her household, there can be no reasonable doubt, consisted of persons who were associated with her, or employed by her, in her business. Chrysostom, an ancient distinguished Greek interpreter, as well as preacher, says on this passage — “See how she persuaded them all!” — taking it for granted, from the circumstances of the case, that the members of her

16 And it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, met us, which brought her masters much gain by sooth-saying:

household were of an age capable of instruction and persuasion. De Wette, a modern German writer on the Scriptures, of much literary authority, and, on account of his ecclesiastical connections (as he is a Lutheran), by no means unfavorable to the practice of infant baptism, says on this passage — “Here, as also in v. 33, in 18: 8, and in 1 Cor. 1: 16, some seek a proof of infant baptism as an apostolic practice; but there is no evidence in these passages that any but adults were baptized.” How often it is the case that a family, whether a permanent one, or one of persons temporarily associated, consists only of adults! and how numerous have been the happy instances of whole families being added to the church, on a profession of their individual faith!

15. *Faithful to the Lord;* a true believer. || *Constrained us;* urged us. The word seems to imply that she succeeded in her request; and from the remark in v. 40, we might gather that the apostle and his company accepted Lydia's invitation.

16. *As we went to prayer;* or, to the place of prayer. See on v. 13. Paul and his company were, at one of their usual times perhaps, passing through the city to the Jews' place of prayer. || *A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination.* The word translated *divination* (literally, *Python*) is one which, in heathen writers, is sometimes applied to Apollo, an imaginary heathen divinity, sometimes also called *Pythian Apollo*. He was believed to inspire a certain priestess at Delphi, in Greece, to predict coming events. The word *Python* was ultimately used to denote a person who professed a supernatural ability to predict future events, as if influenced by a superior spirit. A *spirit of Python*, then (as the original expres-

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul being grieved, turned

sion is), was the same as a *spirit of a diviner*, and is here employed to signify a *soothsaying demon*. This damsel, or girl, is to be regarded as having been a professed fortune-teller, who was consulted by the populace with much confidence, as able to disclose future events. That there was something extraordinary in her case, and that she was really possessed by an evil spirit, would appear from the apostle's language, in the eighteenth verse. We can hardly suppose he would have expressed himself in such a manner, had he not regarded it as a case of real possession. || *Her masters.* It was not unfrequent for more persons than one, to have joint property in a servant who could carry on a gainful business. This young woman, through the prevalent belief of her having more than human insight into the future, was a source of much pecuniary profit to her masters. || *By soothsaying;* by uttering predictions.

17. *These men are the servants of the most high God, &c.* The young woman had probably heard Paul and some of his company declare the purpose of their journey, or had heard of it from others; and perhaps she adopted some of the very words which they had employed. They were in the habit of speaking of themselves as the servants of God, having it for their purpose to teach the way of salvation. Whether she spoke sincerely, and was bearing an honest, though extorted, testimony, such as was borne by evil spirits to our Saviour (Matt. 8: 29. Mark 1: 24), or whether she was jeering at them, and endeavoring to excite ridicule against them, does not appear. She told, indeed, the truth; but the tendency of her speaking was perceived by Paul to be decidedly bad.

and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas,

18. *Paul, being grieved;* being pained at her conduct, and at the consequences which would naturally grow out of it. He felt, too, a just indignation, that an evil spirit should either seem to recommend the preachers of the gospel, or should take advantage of the people's credulity to make them objects of public scorn. Some of the unreflecting multitude might, also, receive an impression from her remarks, apparently favoring and recommending Paul and his company, that these *servants of the Most High* were aided by diabolical influence; or, occasion might be given to evil-minded persons thus to cast reproach on the preachers of the gospel. Compare Matt. 12: 24. Our Saviour, too, was unwilling that evil spirits should bear testimony to him as the Son of God. Compare Mark 1: 25, 34. Their testimony, even if honest, and extorted by a sense and dread of his power, might rather injure, than benefit, his cause. || *I command thee, &c.* The apostle's manner of addressing the evil spirit is strikingly different from the Saviour's manner of speaking on a similar occasion, as recorded in Mark 5: 8—“Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.” The apostle spoke not in his own name; Jesus gave a command on his own authority. The one was a mere man, commissioned by the Saviour, and acting in his name; the other was unspeakably above any man. Compare, also, Acts 9: 34.

19. *The hope of their gains was gone.* The young woman, being dispossessed of the soothsaying spirit, lost her wonderful power and her influence over the populace, and could no longer be so profitable to her masters. This excited them against Paul and Silas. Too often,

and drew *them* into the market-place unto the rulers,

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men,

alas! do men prefer worldly gain to the salvation of their souls, and to the prevalence of true religion. || *Caught Paul and Silas*; seized them as criminals. || *Drew them into the market-place*. In ancient cities, markets were used as convenient places for conducting trials, as well as for traffic.

20. *Brought them to the magistrates*; the same persons as are called in the preceding verse by the more general name *rulers*. It is believed that Philippi, according to Roman customs, was under the government of two magistrates, called *duumviri*, or *pretors*; this latter word, in Latin, corresponding to the Greek word here employed. || *These men, being Jews*. Jews, as being utterly opposed to the prevailing idolatry, and immovably attached to their own religion, were regarded with much odium by other people; and the declaration that Paul and Silas were Jews, was artfully designed as a means of exciting ill-will against them. Jews, above all men, these opposers would hint, ought not to be allowed thus to disturb the peace of the city. When a prejudice has been contracted against certain persons, and they are regarded with contempt, they are often treated as less excusable than any others, even for the same offences. || *Exceedingly trouble our city*; excite great commotion in the city. The subject of religion had, doubtless, been much agitated since Paul had come to the city; and there was much clashing of opinion. The complainants, however, without question, made an extravagant declaration, for the sake of effect on the multitude, and for exciting the magistrates more promptly to deal severely with Paul and Silas.

21. *Customs*; religious practices. || *Which are not lawful for us, &c.* The Roman law granted leave to all people within the empire, to worship

being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive,

in their own way, and would not require any to abandon the religion in which they had been educated, if they did not interfere with the religion of the empire. For persons of a different religion from the prevalent one of the Romans, were not allowed to subvert the national religion; nor did the laws permit new gods to be introduced for the people's worship, except by the public authority. Paul's accusers, therefore, represented him as seeking to introduce religious observances which *Romans* could not lawfully adopt. As it was the duty of the magistrates to prevent dissensions and commotions, and to have a general oversight as to religious customs, the accusation was preferred that *these Jews* were exciting commotion in the city. Had they given the apostle opportunity to speak in his own defence, he would have amply vindicated himself in regard to the charges which were laid against him. The accusation arose from ill-will and hasty excitement; and anxious as the accusers seemed to be, that the dignity of Roman law should not be violated by these intruders, they were themselves fearfully encroaching on the provision which that law made for securing to Jews the exercise of their religion, and for securing freedom from ill-treatment to those who could justly call themselves Romans. Even, however, if the apostle's making known the gospel had directly interfered with the civil regulations of the place, he would have been bold to say, as did Peter on a former occasion, "We ought to obey God rather than man." 5: 29. See, also, 4: 19. The direction to go to Philippi was so evident, that the apostle had no doubt of his having been sent by the Lord. His commission as an apostle was, in his view and in reality, so far as his personal duty was concerned, paramount to all other authority.

neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast

NOTICE, here, the chief solicitude of the apostle's adversaries, and the motive by which they were led to persecute the servants of God. They were anxious only for worldly gain; and, so long as their gain was not interfered with by these preachers of a new religion, they gave themselves no concern about them. But when their wicked method of making money was brought to an end, then they could pretend to be actuated by a generous public spirit in seeking to prevent the progress of Paul and Silas. The love of money, and the fear of interruption to the lucrative business which the prevalent idolatry supported, were principal motives in the persecutions which the first Christians underwent. Compare 19: 25, 26. So true it is that they who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare; and that the love of money is a root of all evil. 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.

22. *The multitude rose up together, &c.* As the proceedings took place at the market, there would be present a large concourse of the lower order, as well as of the more respectable citizens. The populace were easily excited; and they seem to have been determined to take summary vengeance on these hated men. || *The magistrates rent off their clothes.* The magistrates, doubtless, directed the inferior officers, who attended on them,—such as are mentioned in v. 35,—to strip off the clothes of Paul and Silas, and to beat them. This was done in haste and with violence; and the scourging was inflicted, as was usual, on the naked body. The magistrates themselves, perhaps, partook of the excitement; or, perceiving

them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely.

24 Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises

the excited state of the multitude, and deeming it prudent to yield to their wishes, ordered the scourging, so as to quiet the people, intending, it may be, after a short imprisonment, more coolly to investigate the matter. This was probably one of the instances to which Paul referred, when he said, "Thrice was I beaten with rods." 2 Cor. 11: 25.—The multitude is undiscerning; capable of being excited against a good cause, as well as against a bad one.

24. *Thrust them into the inner prison;* as being more secure than the rooms nearer the entrance; for he had been charged to keep them *safely*. Those who were confined in the inner rooms were also treated with more rigor than others. || *Stocks;* a wooden frame for confining prisoners. It had openings, sometimes, for the arms and head, and sometimes, as in this instance, for the feet only. Paul and Silas were closely confined to one spot, scarcely able to stir. It is very possible that they were treated with greater severity than the magistrates' directions required. Well might Paul speak of himself, in 1 Thess. 2: 2, as having been shamefully treated at Philippi. How often have the best of men been the worst used! The Lord of glory was fastened to a cross! No wonder that his servants have sometimes been abused. See Matt. 10: 24, 25. What a changed man was Paul! Once a violent persecutor; now a ready sufferer in the cause which he formerly sought to destroy!

25. *Paul and Silas—sang praises, &c.* How worthy of notice the peace of mind which they enjoyed! God was with them, as he was with Joseph in prison (Gen. 39: 21), and as

unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew

out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled:

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas;

30 And brought them out, and

he was with Daniel in the lions' den (Dan. 6: 22), and with the three Jewish worthies in the fiery furnace. Dan. 3: 25. Compare Is. 43: 2. Heb. 13: 5, 6. Like their brethren who had been called to severe and shameful treatment, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. See 5: 41. Reviled and persecuted by men, they were yet blessed by their Master, and could rejoice in prospect of their great reward in heaven. See Matt. 5: 11, 12. Compare Rom. 5: 3. James 1: 2. || *The prisoners heard them*; and the thought of such unusual sounds in a prison, would prepare them to regard favorably a religion which could make these persecuted men so peaceful and happy.

26. *All the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.* All the doors were thrown open, and the chains and other means of confining the prisoners fell off. Yet the prisoners seem not to have made an attempt to escape, prevented, probably, by the secret interposition of the Almighty. The earthquake and the attending circumstances were of a most remarkable character, and seem designed to show the special presence of God. The opinions generally prevalent at that time would lead those who had been concerned in the ill-treatment of Paul and Silas, and who knew them to be professed servants of the Most High, to regard these occurrences as a special divine testimony in favor of these men. These occurrences contributed, doubtless, to the magistrates' change of conduct towards them.

27. *The keeper of the prison—seeing the prison-doors open.* The jailer's house, or the part of the building which he occupied as a dwelling, overlooked the prison-gates. || *Would have killed himself*; was about to kill himself. Had the prisoners escaped, his own life would have been in jeopardy, particularly as he had received so strict a charge respecting Paul and Silas. He chose rather to die by his own hand, than as a criminal and a victim of public justice. How much more afraid of appearing before man's tribunal than that of God, are men in general!

28. *But Paul cried, &c.* The jailer's outcries, doubtless, revealed the mad purpose he was on the point of executing.

29. *He called for a light; literally, for lights.* He called for torches; and several would at once be brought on such an occasion. || *Came trembling.* The scene was indeed of a terrifying character. In addition to the frightful external circumstances, he began to feel a deep reverence for the two prisoners, whom he had treated with needless rigor. He perceived evidence which he could not resist, that they were indeed servants of the most high God. Humbled in view of the dignity which he now regarded as belonging to them, he felt an awe in their presence, and trembled at thinking of what had been done to them. Besides, a sense of his spiritual danger had come over him, and he saw himself ready to perish for his sins against God.

30. *Brought them out; out of the inner prison.* || *Sirs.* The use of

said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the

this term of address shows the respect which the jailer had now begun to feel for Paul and Silas. The original word was not used indiscriminately in reference to superiors and to inferiors, but was always indicative of respect. || *What must I do to be saved?* The jailer's inquiry had reference to his eternal salvation. He knew the claims which Paul and Silas had advanced to be teachers of a new religion, and their profession of making known the way of salvation. This appears from the language of the young woman, in the seventeenth verse. It was, then, as teachers of the way of salvation, and as servants of God, that the jailer addressed them. The answer of Paul to his inquiry also makes this plain. The jailer's inquiry did not proceed merely from fright, as he had had time to recover from the consternation which had at first seized him. As the prisoners were all safe, he had no occasion to fear the civil authorities; but it was the displeasure of heaven for his sins, that he now dreaded.

31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.* That is, Become a disciple of the Lord Jesus, by accepting his religion. To believe on the Lord Jesus in this manner is, to receive him as the Teacher sent from God, all whose doctrines are true; to trust in him as the only Redeemer, who saves the sinful from the punishment and the power of their sins; and to obey him as the Lord, who has a rightful claim on the affectionate obedience of all men. || *And thy house; thy family.* It is here taken for granted that they, too, must embrace the religion of Jesus, in order to be saved. See on 11:14. To be a disciple of Christ is a personal matter, as it has respect to the soul. Each must become a disciple for himself, in order to be saved. As final salvation is a personal mat-

ter, so is true belief in Christ. The faith of the parent will not answer for the child. The apostle's language may well be considered as suggesting the family's necessities, as well as those of the jailer himself, and as strongly intimating the apostle's desire to address the whole family, as well as the father, on the subject of religion. Opportunity was accordingly given; and according to the following verse, Paul and Silas spake the word of God to him and all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

ter, so is true belief in Christ. The faith of the parent will not answer for the child. The apostle's language may well be considered as suggesting the family's necessities, as well as those of the jailer himself, and as strongly intimating the apostle's desire to address the whole family, as well as the father, on the subject of religion. Opportunity was accordingly given; and according to the following verse, Paul and Silas spake the word of God to him and all that were in his house.

Paul's reply to the jailer should be considered as given by inspiration to every one who proposes the jailer's inquiry. For 'there is no other name under heaven among men whereby we can be saved.' The great question put by the jailer, ought to be distinctly and earnestly contemplated by every one. Nor let us rest contented with any hope of eternal life, unless it is built on Jesus Christ, the sure corner-stone.

32. *They spake unto him the word of the Lord, &c.*; made known the chief points pertaining to the religion of Christ. They had already declared to the jailer, in general terms, that salvation must be obtained by becoming a disciple of Christ; they now more particularly unfolded this truth, and presented the claims of Jesus as the Saviour of men.

33. *And was baptized, he and all his.* They had all, according to the preceding verse, been instructed in the doctrine of Christ. And having complied with the apostle's direction to embrace the religion of Christ, they were accordingly baptized. For thus had the Saviour commanded his disciples—"Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28:19. Compare Mark 16:16. || *Straightway;*

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants,

immediately. There was, doubtless, within the walls of the prison, as both Grotius and Rosenmüller suggest, a bath, or pool, suitable for the administration of baptism. The Rev. Mr. Judson, also, missionary in Burmah, says, in his sermon on Christian Baptism, preached in Calcutta at the time of his baptism — “This case [that of the jailer] can present no difficulty to the minds of any of you, who may have been within the yard of the prison in this city, or are acquainted with the fact, that prison-yards, in the East, as well as the yards and gardens of private houses, are usually furnished with tanks of water.”

34. *When he had brought them into his house*; that is, from the place where baptism was administered. *He set meat before them*. The jailer had undergone an entire change as to his religious character; and as one of the fruits of this change, he treated Paul and Silas, not only with respect, but also in a most affectionate manner, washing their lacerated bodies (v. 33), and spreading his table for their nourishment. *Rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*. The whole family had become believers. How remarkably God overruled persecution! The conversion of the jailer and his family sprang from the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. Thus God makes the wrath of man to praise him. Ps. 76: 10. Persecution ought not to dishearten a follower of Christ; but to make him summon up his confidence in the Saviour, while he yields himself to the providence and the Spirit of God. For even adversities may conduce, as the apostle intimates in Phil. 1: 12, “to the furtherance of the gospel.”

35. *The magistrates sent the sergeants, &c.*; sent them to the jailer. The magistrates had become con-

saying, Let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

vinced, on cool reflection, or by providential circumstances, that they had treated Paul and Silas with great injustice, and that there was no valid ground of accusation. To appease an enraged multitude, they had publicly beaten and imprisoned men who were strangers, unconvicted of a crime, and even without a hearing. This was contrary to Roman usages. They were now anxious to get rid of these abused men, as quietly and with as little formality as possible. The passions of the people had also become quieted, and no further demand was expected from their enemies for their continued ill-treatment. The earthquake, doubtless, had some influence on the magistrates. Information, too, which the jailer would hardly fail to communicate, would tend to soften their disposition towards Paul and Silas.—The *sergeants* were inferior officers, who attended on the magistrates as their official servants, to convey messages and to execute their orders. The badge of their office was a bundle of rods, which they carried with them when attending on the magistrates, in imitation of the Roman officers called *lictors*. The very title of these officers, in the Greek language, contains a reference to this badge of office.

36. *Go in peace*. The jailer was, doubtless, happy at receiving the magistrates' message, and rejoiced that the storm of persecution had passed away. Presuming that Paul and Silas would at once embrace the opportunity of being set at large, he addressed them with affectionate desires for their prosperity; as if he had said, Go and prosper; peace be with you. His language to them seems to have implied a suggestion from the magistrates, that they would depart from the city.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly un-

37. *Paul said unto them*; Paul sent a reply, through the jailer, to the sergeants who had brought word from the magistrates. || *They have beaten us, &c.* A brief, yet singularly comprehensive and earnest statement of the wrongs which Paul and his companion had endured. Every word is full of meaning, and shows the utter injustice of the magistrates, and the claim which these sufferers might have, lawfully and successfully, preferred for redress against the magistrates. The law of the empire forbade that any native Roman citizen, or any one who had acquired the right of citizenship, should be subjected to scourging. It was a punishment, fit only, in the judgment of a Roman, for slaves. It was the height of presumption for a magistrate to inflict stripes, or any torture, on a Roman citizen. However distant from the city of Rome, the assertion, 'I am a Roman citizen,' was a sure defence against such an indignity, unless the magistrate was lost to all sense of propriety and respect for his station. || *Uncondemned.* One of the chief provisions of the Roman law was, that no citizen should be liable to punishment before conviction and condemnation. Compare 25:16. In the case of Paul and Silas, there was no regular accusation, no conviction, not even a hearing in their behalf; their rights were wholly disregarded by Roman magistrates, out of compliance with the wishes of an excited multitude. || *Being Romans*; Roman citizens, entitled to the rights and privileges secured by law to such. These rights and privileges were great; their possessor was entitled to respect and protection from Roman magistrates. — The apostle Paul, who was a Jew by parentage, possessed also, by birth, the right of citizenship, so as to be a Roman, in the legal sense of the word. See 22:28. Some have supposed that the fact of his having been born in Tarsus, a free city of the Roman empire, se-

condemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now

cured to him the privileges of citizenship. But this view does not agree with the circumstance, that though Paul, when apprehended by the Jews in Jerusalem, informed the chief captain that he was a citizen of Tarsus (21:39. 22:3), yet the chief captain proposed to subject him to scourging, and had actually proceeded so far as to bind him with thongs for that purpose. And it was only by Paul's informing the centurion that he was a Roman citizen, that the chief captain, apprized of the fact by the centurion, saw the impropriety of treating him thus, and immediately desisted from his purpose. 22:27—30. Tarsus was, indeed, in Roman phraseology, *a free city*; that is, it was governed by magistrates of its own election; it was not under the jurisdiction of a Roman governor, nor was it held by a Roman garrison; yet, it acknowledged the sway of the Roman people, and professed a general subjection to the imperial authority, and was under obligation to furnish aid against powers at war with Rome. It is, therefore, more probable that some one of Paul's ancestors had acquired the right of citizenship by some meritorious services in behalf of the empire. Perhaps some ancestor of Paul had obtained it by purchase; for this privilege was sometimes thus acquired, and Jews would avail themselves of the opportunity of procuring it, so that they might traffic to greater advantage in Roman cities, and have a right to their own national customs, even when in cities that were not wholly under Roman jurisdiction. Paul being descended from an ancestor who had obtained the right, of course, inherited it. Silas, too, was a Ronian citizen; but as this verse and the following are the only ones which make known the fact, no clew is given to show us how he obtained the distinction. || *And have cast us into prison.* The Roman law did not allow an accused person to be closely confined, until after conviction or confession.

do they thrust us out privily ? nay verily ; but let them come them-

Before trial, such a person was indeed kept under guard, for security's sake, in the house of a magistrate, or of some responsible person. || *Do they thrust us out privily ?* and make no reparation for wrongs done to us personally in public, or for the contempt which they have cast on the rights and honor of Roman citizenship ? Do they think to screen themselves from justice, and from a deserved acknowledgment of their illegal conduct, by inducing us to retire in secrecy ? || *Let them come themselves and fetch us out.* By so doing, the magistrates would give a public declaration of the illegality and rashness of their own conduct, and of the innocence of Paul and Silas. The whole community would then be convinced, that wrong had been done to these men. It was, among the Macedonians particularly, a testimony to the innocence of imprisoned persons, if the magistrates should publicly release them from prison.

The conduct of Paul and Silas, on this occasion, is by no means an instance of obstinacy, or of undignified contending for a point of honor. They had been grossly and wantonly abused : their rights as men, and especially as Roman citizens, had been trampled on, and that by the very officers of justice in a Roman city. It was proper, then, that there should be a public vindication of their character, and manifestation of their innocence. For the humility of a Christian is not at variance with his rights as a citizen, or with propriety in maintaining those rights. Christians should be ready to submit to abuse, rather than violently to resist and to resent it. But it is no virtue to be willing that our rights, either personal or public, should be trampled on, when in a legal and kind way those rights may be maintained, and the public good be thus promoted. A just regard for the safety of others, who might be entitled to protection

selves and fetch us out.

38 And the sergeants told these

and freedom from insult by virtue of their Roman citizenship, also required Paul and Silas firmly to maintain their rights. A great question of right and of privilege was involved ; and if these men could be thus abused, and then sent away without the least reparation, any one might be exposed to similar indignity, whenever an excited multitude should demand it, and the magistrates should allow themselves to contract ill-will against him, notwithstanding the pledged interference and protection of the Roman name. It was proper, too, that the character of Paul and Silas, as preachers of the gospel, should be vindicated, and shown to be above suspicion of ill-desert. Had they privately retired from the prison and the city, the mass of the inhabitants would have known them only as disturbers of the public peace, who had been summarily punished ; and the Christian name, connected with such associations, would have become doubly repulsive. Besides, it might be, that, should they retire privately, they would be reported as having dishonestly escaped from prison. Many public considerations were thus involved in this matter, pertaining to the civil community, and to the cause of Christ, which required that their leaving of the prison should be as public as their entering it, and that the community should know them to be abused, innocent men. All this was well accomplished by the magistrates' formally visiting the prison, and virtually making acknowledgments by requesting them to come out ; not to add, that the haughtiness of the magistrates, and their disregard of law, and their inconsiderate yielding to a clamorous multitude, received a deserved rebuke. The result was, that Paul and Silas left Philippi with respect ; and proper regard might be hoped for, in reference to the Christian cause. There was, probably, a reaction in favor of the cause of Paul

words unto the magistrates: and they feared when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

and Silas. We know that a Christian church arose from these beginnings.

It may be asked, Why did not Paul and Silas plead their rights as Roman citizens in the market-place, and thus cut short the proceedings against them? It is easy to see, however, that the proceedings in the market-place were so tumultuous and sudden, that their voices could not be heard, or would not be heeded. They were rushed upon with scarcely any formality.

38. *And they feared.* To invade the rights of a Roman was held a violation of the rights and dignity of the Roman people, and subjected a magistrate to the danger of being summoned to the imperial city to answer for his offence before the Roman people. The punishment for this crime was death and confiscation of goods. || *When they heard that they were Romans.* The declaration of Paul respecting himself and his companion, was at once believed. All the circumstances connected with them conspired to gain confidence for them, as persons who were faithful to truth; and they were probably regarded, since the earthquake, as enjoying the special protection of heaven, and thus worthy to be trusted. In almost any case, however, such a declaration, made to a public officer, would be at once believed, because a fraudulent pretence of being a Roman citizen subjected a person to capital punishment. Whenever, then, a claim to Roman citizenship was made, the presumption was, that the claim was a true one.

39. *And they—besought them.* The magistrates, doubtless, made suitable concessions, acknowledging the impropriety of their own course, and requesting them to overlook it. || *De-*

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

sired them to depart, &c.; requested them to leave the city, not as a matter which the magistrates had a right to demand, but as a favor to the magistrates, and a means of preventing any further tumult.

40. *Lydia; vs. 14, 15.* || *When they had seen the brethren.* Lydia's house, during her sojourn in the city for purposes of traffic, was probably the resort of those who had embraced the gospel; and there Paul and Silas would be likely to find the disciples. Or, being the place which they had made their abode, they would naturally wish, before leaving the city, to call together those who had become Christians. Luke's account is very brief, and does not mention any other cases of conversion than those in Lydia's family and the jailer's. It is altogether probable, however, that there were other cases. Paul, being about to leave the city with Silas, would also wish to confer with Timothy and Luke, his other companions (vs. 3, 10), respecting measures to be adopted. || *And departed.* Paul and Silas departed from the city. Luke and Timothy probably remained, to carry forward the work which had been commenced. An important church was gathered here; to which one of the apostle's epistles was directed.

From the peculiarity of expression in vs. 10—15, namely, the writer's using the words *we* and *us*, we learn that Luke, the writer of the Acts, was in Paul's company. A different mode of expression, namely, the use of the third person, *they*, is adopted in this verse, showing that the writer did not from this city accompany Paul and Silas. This use of the third person, as speaking of individuals among whom the writer did not include himself, continues as far as to

CHAPTER XVII.

1 Paul preacheth at Thessalonica, 4 where some believe, and others persecute him. 10 He is sent to Berea, and preacheth there. 13 Being persecuted at Thessalonica, 15 he cometh to Athens, and disputeth, and preacheth the living God to them unknown, 34 whereby many are converted unto Christ.

20:5, where the use of the first person is resumed. By a comparison of these passages, and of the 6th verse, 20th chapter, it appears probable that Luke remained in Philippi until Paul returned to this city on his way to Asia Minor and to Jerusalem. Mention is again made of Timothy in 17:14; and from that passage we learn, that he was afterwards at Berea with Paul and Silas; for Paul left him there with Silas, when he himself proceeded to Athens. Perhaps Timothy was left with Luke at Philippi, while Paul and Silas went through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica (17:1), and then rejoined them at Berea. 17:10, 14.

CHAPTER XVII.

1. *Amphipolis*; the chief city of the first division of Macedonia, that country being then divided into four parts. See on 16:12. This city was a short distance south-west from Philippi, at the head of a bay, and near the entrance of the river Strymon into that bay. It was so situated that the Strymon flowed nearly around it, making it a peninsula; and from this circumstance the city received its name, the word *Amphipolis* being compounded of two words signifying *around* and *city*. It was originally a colony of the Athenians. In the middle ages, the place bore the name of *Chrysopolis*, or *golden city*. There is now a village upon the site of the ancient city, called *Empoli*. || *Apollonia*; another city, not far from Amphipolis, and situated between it and Thessalonica. Paul and Silas merely *passed through* these cities, without tarrying in them, on their

NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

way to Thessalonica. || *Thessalonica*; the chief city of the second division of Macedonia. It was situated at the head of a bay, called, in ancient geography, *Sinus Thermaicus*, and was itself anciently named *Therma*. It was the residence of the Roman governor, and the inhabitants were mostly Greeks and Romans, though many Jews were settled there. The modern city is called *Saloniki*, and has a large population. || *Where was a synagogue of the Jews*. It is probable that, in the neighboring cities, and perhaps generally in the cities of Macedonia, the Jews did not have synagogues, but only, as at Philippi (16:13), places for prayer and for less formal worship. The fact, therefore, of there being a synagogue in Thessalonica would be worthy of special mention.

2. *As his manner was*. It was a very great advantage for the early introduction of the gospel into the cities of the Roman empire, that in so many of them there were Jewish synagogues, in which worship was regularly performed every sabbath, and to which all Jews, of course, had access. It was Paul's custom, wherever he found Jews, to attend with them at their worship, and explain to them the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and preach the gospel. He was in the habit of first seeking the Jews, and unfolding to them his message; and afterwards he sought opportunity to instruct the Gentiles. || *Reasoned with them out of the scriptures*; discoursed to them, drawing his arguments from the Jewish Scriptures. For on these Scriptures the Jews built their hopes of the Messiah's coming.

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

3. *Opening and alleging*; laying open and setting before them. The truths which Paul wished to enforce, were treasured up in the Jewish Scriptures; he disclosed them, and presented them to his hearers. The chief topics of discourse to which he called the attention of the Jews, are next stated. || *That Christ must needs have suffered*; that the Messiah must, according to the Scriptures, have suffered death. The prophecies of the Old Testament speak of the Messiah's glory and triumphs, as well as of the humiliation which was to precede his state of glory. The Jews had generally overlooked, or had not properly contemplated, the predictions which told of his sufferings, and had, therefore, formed a partial view of the expected Messiah. Their minds were filled with thoughts of his personal and official grandeur, and of the dignity to which they supposed he would elevate their nation, as being God's people. Hence it was necessary to correct the current opinions, and to show the Jews that, according to the ancient prophets, the Messiah was first to pass through ignominy and suffering. The erroneous view here alluded to, was cherished in the time of our Lord; and after his resurrection, he explained, *out of the Scriptures*, to two of the disciples, into whose company he had introduced himself, the truth that the sufferings, through which he had passed, had been predicted, and that it was necessary for him to endure them, as preliminary to entering on his state of glory. See Luke 24: 25—27, 44—46. The necessity, to which Paul referred, for the Messiah's sufferings, arose from the fact that prophecy had foretold those sufferings; if they had not been endured, the word of God would have been broken. Besides, such was the divine plan for men's salva-

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas: and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

tion, that the Messiah was to be made a sin-offering (Is. 53: 3—10); his blood was to be shed, and he must die, that he might become a propitiatory sacrifice for sinners (Rom. 3: 25, 26), suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. 1 Pet. 3: 18. The necessity for the Saviour's death, however, by no means excused the wickedness of those who imbrued their hands in his blood. See 2: 23. || *And risen again from the dead*. This, too, had been foretold in the Old Testament; and it was extremely important to convince the Jews on this point from their own Scriptures, that they might correctly understand the nature of the Messiah's office, and be led to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. This was the point which the apostle Peter argued in his address on the day of Pentecost (2: 24—32), and which Paul urged so earnestly in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. 13: 30—39. Our Lord himself, too, very distinctly unfolded to the disciples, on some occasions, the truths that he was to suffer a violent death, and to be raised up from the dead; thus correcting their erroneous opinions, and preparing them for the scenes through which he must pass, and which would be so appalling to them. See Matt. 16: 21. 17: 9, 22, 23. In Rom. 1: 4, the apostle mentions the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, as a convincing proof of his being really the Son of God. || *This Jesus — is Christ*; this Jesus is the Messiah. For in Jesus the ancient prophecies, respecting the Messiah's death and resurrection, were fulfilled.

4. *Some — consorted with Paul and Silas*; became their adherents; and, as we sometimes say, cast in their lots with them, as followers of Jesus Christ. || *Devout Greeks*; Greeks who had become, partially at least,

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them

Jewish proselytes. || *The chief women*; women of high standing in society, who had embraced the Jewish religion, and now became Christians. Compare 13: 50.

It appears from the fourth verse, that the labors of Paul and Silas were remarkably successful in Thessalonica. The large number that embraced the gospel, particularly as many of them had been converted from among idolaters (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10), makes it probable that the *three* sabbath days mentioned in the second verse do not cover all the time that they spent in this city. It appears from Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, that, while there, he labored with his own hands to procure a subsistence (1 Thess. 2: 9. 2 Thess. 3: 8), and from the Epistle to the Philippians (4: 16), that, while in Thessalonica, he received contributions for his support from Philippi. We may therefore infer, that the three sabbath days were employed in laboring among the *Jews*; and that after their opposition became decided, Paul and Silas devoted themselves to the Gentile population with great success. This circumstance, too, added fuel to the flame of the Jews' ill-will, and aroused them to contrive means for hastening the departure of these zealous and successful preachers of the gospel.

5. *The Jews — moved with envy*; excited by jealousy at the success which attended Paul and Silas. || *Lewd fellows of the baser sort*. The word *lewd* was formerly used with a wider signification than at present, and meant *vile, ill-disposed, mischievous*. Such is its meaning here. By the *baser sort* are meant *idlers*, such as are ready to become the tools of

not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also;

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying, that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

any disaffected persons in creating a tumult. || *Gathered a company*; drew together a crowd, or raised a mob. || *Assaulted the house of Jason*. The opposers of Paul knew that Jason was favorable to him, and had entertained him in his house. From Rom. 16: 21, it appears that Jason was a relative of Paul's. || *Sought to bring them out to the people*. The word here rendered *people* does not refer to the tumultuous assemblage which had thrown the city into commotion, but to a regular assembly of the citizens. The crowd assailed Jason's house, in order to get possession of Paul and Silas, and to have them arraigned before an assembly of the people, to answer accusations which would then be laid against them.

6. *When they found them not*. Paul and Silas had probably, to elude the crowd, repaired to another house. || *These that have turned the world upside down, &c.* Their language was the outbreak of excited and extravagant feeling. They would represent these two men as going about every where, putting the people in commotion, and overturning society.

7. *Jason hath received*; entertained as guests under his roof. || *These all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, &c.* Paul and Silas, and their adherents, were thus charged with sedition and rebellion against the Roman emperor, because they professed to honor Jesus as a king. The word *king* was applied to the Roman emperor; and wherever the Roman power extended, no one besides the emperor, or without his permission, as in the case of dependent kings, could wear the title *king* as a term of civil office. Of course, then, to maintain the interest

8 And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming

of any other person than the emperor, as king, in the *civil* sense of the term, would be seditious. These evil-minded Jews took advantage of the common people's ignorance, and of the magistrates' loyalty. For neither the people nor the magistrates would at once, without explanation, perceive the meaning of the word *king*, as applied to Jesus. Similar policy was adopted by the chief priests against Jesus, in order to excite Pilate's fears, and to procure his consent to the death of Jesus. They accused Jesus of making himself a king, and thus of being a rebel against Cesar. See Luke 23: 2. John 18: 33—37. 19: 12.

8. *They troubled the people and the rulers.* The people would be agitated with fear that a Roman force would be brought against them, if seditious men, as Paul and Silas, and their adherents, were declared to be, were harbored in the city. The magistrates would participate in this fear, and would also dread a popular tumult, which might, in existing circumstances, be easily raised.

9. *When they had taken security of Jason, &c.* Jason and those who, with him, had been brought before the magistrates (v. 6), entered into an engagement that Paul and Silas should leave the city, as would appear by the following verse. They gave security for this, perhaps, in a certain sum of money, which they were to forfeit in case of their engagement's being violated.

10. *The brethren—sent away Paul and Silas.* Though Paul and Silas left Thessalonica, yet the doctrine they had introduced remained, and was seed which brought forth much fruit. See the apostle's two Epistles

thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12. Therefore many of them be-

to the Thessalonians. || *Berea*; another city of Macedonia, south-west from Thessalonica, and not far from it. || *Went into the synagogue of the Jews*; as was their custom. See on v. 2.

11. *These were more noble*; noble minded, that is, generous and well disposed. || *And searched the scriptures.* It was the Jews and proselytes, to whom Paul and Silas here presented the gospel; they would, of course, if well disposed, examine the Scriptures of the Old Testament, to ascertain whether the sentiments advanced agreed with the word of God. The apostles constantly appealed to the Old Testament, as showing what was to be the character of the Messiah, and as predicting his sufferings and resurrection; and thus they vindicated the claims of Jesus to be received as the Messiah and Saviour. See v. 3.

A GOOD EXAMPLE we have in the Bereans. They searched the Scriptures daily.

12. *Therefore many of them believed.* The agreement between the sentiments advanced by Paul and Silas, and the Old Testament, was soon discerned; and, as a consequence, many received the truth, and believed in Jesus. As in the case of the Bereans, so, generally, a careful and devout study of the Scriptures leads to true faith in Christ. — It is worthy of serious consideration, that some distinguished opposers of the Christian religion have candidly acknowledged that they had not read the New Testament. And men who have read it, and maintained a decided hostility to the religion of Jesus, read

lied; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of

it not with candid and ingenuous minds, but with a predisposition to judge unfavorably, and to cavil.
|| *Of honorable women, &c.* See on v. 4.

13. *The Jews — came thither also.* The spirit of envy (v. 5) is restless. The Jews of Thessalonica could not be contented with removing from their own city these distinguished ministers of Jesus; but sought still to interrupt their labors, to the full extent of their ability. Sometimes, the enemies of the cross are more active in opposing religion than its friends are in maintaining it, and put themselves, occasionally, to greater inconvenience in opposing the gospel, than do the servants of Jesus in seeking to advance his cause. || *And stirred up the people;* created a popular tumult. Before the Jews from Thessalonica came to interfere with Paul and Silas, there was no disturbance among the people. There was, indeed, an earnest attention to the subject of religion, and many were becoming followers of Jesus, but not with public disorder or tumult. These Jews, however, were willing to throw the public mind into agitation, in the hope of casting odium on the Christian cause. Could they produce this effect, they cared not for the inconsistency of their stirring up the people, though they had made this a charge against Paul and Silas. Compare v. 6.

14. *The brethren sent away Paul.* As on a former occasion (14:19), so now, Paul was eminently the object of the Jews' ill-will, as being clearly the leader of the Christian cause. It was particularly Paul, who was so powerful an advocate of the Christian cause, and whose influence was the greater because he had been an avowed and earnest defender of

Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

the Jewish faith, and persecutor of the Christian name, that the Jews sought to circumvent. Hence it was Paul whom the Christian brethren now sent from Berea, to avoid the ill designs of the Jews, while Silas and Timotheus still remained there. || *To go, as it were, to the sea.* These words, in connection with the map, may make the impression, that the brethren, in sending away Paul, made a show of going to a seaport to take ship, while yet, perhaps, they meant to conduct him to Athens (v. 15), and possibly by land; thus, by a stratagem, deceiving his persecutors, and eluding their vigilance. There is nothing, however, in the connection which prevents us from supposing that he went to Athens by sea. There was a seaport named Pydna, not far from Berea, whence he might sail for Athens; and it is wholly reasonable, that he might wish to avoid the opposition of the Jews, which he might still further encounter, should he pass through the cities between Berea and Athens. But whether he actually sailed to Athens, or circumstances made it more convenient to go by land, does not appear. In regard to the expression, *as it were*, the best Greek scholars give a different translation of the original. They consider the original as simply conveying the idea of direction *towards* the sea. || *Silas and Timotheus abode there still.* It would seem that Timotheus had been left at Philippi with Luke, when Paul and Silas left Philippi. See on 16:40. But from the mention of Timotheus here, it may be concluded that he, also, shortly after left Philippi, and rejoined Paul and Silas at Berea. In a similar manner, Paul now departed from Berea, leaving there Silas and Timotheus.

* 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was

15. *Athens.* This was the chief city of ancient Greece. It was so named in honor of the heathen deity Minerva, whose name, in Greek, was *Athene*. The city was the seat of the fine arts, was the resort of philosophers, and was the birthplace of many eminent men. The inhabitants were distinguished for military valor and general intelligence. || *A commandment unto Silas and Timotheus to come to him*; from Berea, where he had left them. v. 14. He intended that they should meet him at Athens.

16. *His spirit was stirred in him, &c.*; his soul was deeply affected, at seeing so many evidences, that the Athenians, with all their intelligence and refinement, knew not God. || *He saw the city wholly given to idolatry*; full of idols. The Athenians were excessively devoted to idolatry. They introduced idols into their city from every part of the world with which they had connection, aiming to honor every deity that was any where worshipped, and supposing that the greater the variety of gods, the more sure might they be of divine protection and of prosperity. Thus Athens had, according to the declaration of an ancient author, more images than all the rest of Greece; and another satirically remarks, that it was more easy to find there a god than a man. "On every side," says another, "might be seen altars, sacrificial victims, and temples." The gods acknowledged here are said, by an ancient Greek writer, to have been thirty thousand. So fearful were the Athenians of omitting any god that might possibly exist, that they erected altars to unknown gods.

17. *Disputed he in the synagogue.*

stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers

The word *dispute*, as now understood, does not convey the proper idea of Paul's speaking to the Jews. The term *discoursed* is nearer the meaning of the original word. Paul discoursed to the Jews in the synagogue, discussing not so much the general nature of true religion, in distinction from the idolatry which prevailed in Athens, as exhibiting and enforcing the proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus. This was the theme on which he dwelt in his preaching to the Jews; and with this would be connected all the cardinal points of the Christian religion. Compare v. 3. In his interviews with the Athenians in the market, his manner would naturally be more like that of a disputant, calmly, yet earnestly, debating the subject of religion with those who were willing to listen to him, or to take part against him: || *Devout persons*; Greek proselytes, as distinguished from Jews. Compare v. 4. || *In the market.* See on 16: 19. The market, or forum, was a place of public resort, and was convenient for holding discussions, as men of all professions and characters might be found there. There were many such public places in Athens. There was one in particular, in the most thickly inhabited part of the city, and in the vicinity of the place where the Stoic philosophers used to hold their discussions. It was known by the name Eretria, and was probably the one which is here meant. || *Them that met with him*; any that came there. These would be many, as this forum was a place of very public resort, and philosophers and other distinguished men were in the habit of there proposing and discussing their favorite views. In no better, and even in no

of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And

more respectable, way, could Paul call public attention to himself as a teacher of religion.

18. *Certain philosophers*; learned men, who devoted themselves to speculations concerning the human soul, man's duties, his highest good and destiny, and concerning the gods. *Philosophy*, among the ancients, included the subject of men's moral and religious relations and duties quite as much as, if not more than, that of the faculties and employment of the human mind. It professed also to explain the formation of the universe and the nature of the gods. The Athenian philosophers, thus making religion a prominent part of their speculations, would feel a special interest in Paul, as a professed teacher of a new religion, and would readily enter into discussion. They cherished much pride of opinion, and would seize on an opportunity to vindicate their own opinions, and to display their reasoning powers. || *The Epicureans*; philosophers, so named from their founder Epicurus, who commenced teaching in Athens about 306 years before Christ. Their leading sentiments were, that man's highest good consists in his personal happiness, and that virtue is to be pursued and vice shunned, not for their own sakes, on account of their own nature, but on account of their influence on man's happiness. They were atheists, believing the universe to have been formed by the concurrence of indivisible atoms which had existed from eternity. They disbelieved, of course, the doctrine of a divine providence; and though they professed to believe in the existence of beings of a higher order than man, and used the word *gods*, yet they considered the gods as wholly indifferent to this world and to the interests of the human race. To the souls of men they ascribed no higher origin than they did to the material universe, and regarded both as destined to destruction. The idea of a future life was not cherished by

some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to

them. || *The Stoics*. These philosophers derived their name from the Greek word *stoa*, meaning *porch*, or *portico*, and applied to the place where their founder, Zeno, held his discussions and delivered his doctrines. The moral principles of this sect were of an elevated order, and inculcated indifference to pain and suffering. They cherished, however, an inordinate pride. The universe, according to the system of the Stoics, is controlled by fate, or a fatal necessity, to which even the Supreme Being is subject, and between God and men they acknowledged no material difference, so far as morals are concerned, both being bound by an unalterable necessity of nature. They conceived the essence of God to be fire, diffused throughout the universe, and the souls of men to have proceeded from that original fire, and destined to vanish away by returning to it, or being absorbed in it. Their sentiments, however, were not fixed and uniform in regard to the condition of the human soul hereafter; some of them believing, that human souls would continue to exist till the world should be consumed by fire, but none believing in the real immortality of the soul. — Between the apostle and these sects of philosophers, there was an utter difference as to morals and religion. || *Encountered him*; entered into discussion with him. || *This babbler*; a mere prater, not worth attention. Thus did some of these self-conceited philosophers and their adherents express their contempt for Paul. They had imbibed such false principles, and were so puffed up with a falsely called science, that they thought him worthy only to be jeered at as a retailer of trifling, impertinent talk. Compare 1 Cor. 1: 18. Matt. 11: 25. The gospel, so far as they obtained some ideas respecting it, appeared foolishness to them. 1 Cor. 1: 18, 23. And thus they furnished an illustration of the sentiment ex-

be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

pressed by our Lord in Matt. 11: 25—“Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” || *A setter forth of strange gods;* a proclaimer and advocate of foreign gods, of gods not hitherto known in Athens. This circumstance would, in itself, be no strong objection against a public teacher, as the Athenians had been desirous to pay honor in their city to all divinities; but the fact that a person should make known a new divinity, would naturally excite attention, and at first, surprise. || *Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.* The sacred writer thus shows the ground on which these men considered Paul as making known a new god; for when they called him a proclaimer of strange gods, they probably spoke hyperbolically. The Athenians supposed that Jesus was the name of a new divinity, like the names, which were in current use among them, of heathen gods. They obtained some indistinct ideas from the apostle’s statements; and their minds were so much preoccupied with heathenish notions, that they readily attached these notions to the name of Jesus. He had also announced to them the resurrection from the dead. See vs. 31, 32. They seem to have partially apprehended the apostle’s views; and some of these views they associated with their heathen notions of the Deity, and some were quite new to them and hitherto unthought of. Attracted by a love of novelty and of disputation, they wished to hear still further from him.

19. *And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus.* There is no intimation that any violence was done to the apostle, or that he was apprehended by the civil authority. The movement originated, probably, with the philosophers, who wished to hear more, and to have an opportunity to discuss the subject which Paul had

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this

introduced: There would naturally be among those who had heard Paul, both philosophers and others, persons very desirous to hear still further; some with an honest intention to ascertain his views, others with a design to cavil, and still others from a love of being in a crowd, and of hearing a public address or debate. Some might have had mischievous motives; but the whole proceeding has the air of a popular, though not tumultuous, and indeed respectable, excitement to gratify curiosity, rather than of a judicial movement, or of an ill-designed concourse. The word *Areopagus* would have been more properly translated *Mars-hill*, as it is in v. 22; as it here designates the place to which the apostle was conducted, not the Athenian court, called the Areopagus, and so called from this place, where its sessions were held. Mars-hill was an elevation west of the city, and not far from the Acropolis, or citadel of Athens. It commanded a splendid view of the stately temples and other edifices of the city, and was a very convenient place for holding assemblies. It was, as has already been intimated, the seat of the celebrated Athenian court, and was fitted up in a manner suitable for accommodating an audience at a public address or discussion, as well as for the sessions of the court. It derived its name from its having been consecrated to Mars, the heathen god of war; or from the mythological story that Mars was tried here by a council of twelve gods, for the murder of a son of Neptune, Mars being the first who was here arraigned for trial.—It was not before the Athenian court, called the Areopagus, that Paul was brought. For there is no hint of any accusation; nor was his address directed to judges, or members of the court, but to the people. v. 22. Nor was his address a vindication of himself, but a statement of the chief articles of religious doc-

new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is*?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent

trine, as held and taught by him. In all probability, some of the more influential persons at the forum, or market, suggested the propriety of the company there collected together going in a mass to Mars-hill, to listen to an address from Paul, or to a discussion between him and the philosophers; and the proposal was at once adopted. || *May we know, &c.* The Athenians were remarkable for their politeness and refinement; and the manner in which they thus prepared the way for Paul to make known his sentiments, was designed to be, apparently at least, respectful. The philosophers had no heartfelt respect for Paul, but were glad to have an opportunity for debate, and doubtless expected an easy triumph over a Jew.

20. *Thou bringest certain strange things; new, unheard-of, and surprising things.* || *We would know therefore what these things mean; we wish to hear more fully, and to know what your views will turn out to be.*

21. *For all the Athenians, &c.;* a remark made by Luke, to show the disposition of the Athenians, and to account for the readiness of the assembly to hear the apostle. This statement of Luke agrees with notices which frequently occur in ancient writers respecting the Athenians. They were remarkable for spending time in places of public resort, for learning and telling the news, and for light conversation. There were no fewer than three hundred and sixty places in the city, where people of the lower orders were in the habit of meeting one another for conversation; while the more respectable classes had also

their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, *Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.*

their places of resort for the same purpose. || *Strangers which were there;* foreigners, who had become resident in Athens, or who were merely sojourning there for business or pleasure. The character which Luke here gives of the Athenians, is also ascribed to them by two of their own distinguished writers, Demosthenes and Thucydides.

22. *In all things ye are too superstitious.* The best writers are agreed, that the apostle intended here to acknowledge the great respect which the Athenians professed for the gods, rather than to charge them directly with being excessively superstitious. This respect, he acknowledged, they showed *in all things;* that is, in all the ways which had been devised for honoring the divinities. The original word, translated *too superstitious*, was used by the Greeks in a good sense, as meaning *religiously disposed, reverencing the divinities.* It has, also, here, in the Greek, the comparative form, as though the apostle would grant to the Athenians, that they were more religiously disposed, more regardful of honor to the gods, than were the people of other cities; or, that they were very religiously disposed, that is, *in their way.* By such a declaration, he would be likely to gain their attention and good-will, and thus prepare them to hear respecting the true God. He by no means commended their inordinate devotion to idolatry, but simply accorded to them the credit, to which they were well entitled, and an acknowledgment of which would be gratifying to them, of being unusually interested in paying honor to supposed deities. At the same time, the word he used being commonly

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO

employed in reference to the heathen divinities, there would be no contradiction between his opening remark and the conclusion to which the Athenians must have seen that his address tended; namely, that they were ignorant of the true God, and of the worship which is his due.

23. *As I passed by; as I passed through the streets of your city.*
 || *And beheld your devotions.* The word *devotions* does not here mean the performance of religious worship, or of the sacred rites, but the objects which the Athenians held as sacred, or regarded devoutly; such as the temples, altars, and images consecrated to different divinities; the sacred places and sacred things which every where met the eye in Athens.
 || *I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.* There were altars in Athens, dedicated to no particular gods, and bearing no name. There were, also, other altars dedicated to *unkno[n] and foreign gods*, without making reference to any one divinity. Paul found, also, an altar dedicated particularly to *some one unknown God*; and his remarks seem to imply, that the God, to whom they had thus ignorantly erected an altar, was the true God, of whom they had obtained some knowledge, and to whom they thus paid a sort of reverence. How any of the Athenians obtained such an idea as led them to erect this altar, we are unable to explain. It is certain, that some of the reasonings of distinguished ancient philosophers proceeded on the principle that there must be *one supreme God*, immensely different from, and superior to, the mass of heathen divinities. From the knowledge of God, too, which, in various degrees and through various channels, was extensively spread by means of the Jewish nation, and from some very early tradition, it is very conceivable that some persons were impressed with a belief that there

THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

must be a God different from the acknowledged ones, but of whom they were very ignorant, and that they erected this altar to his honor, in hopes that light would be shed on the subject, and that the *unknown God* would, by and by, be made known to them. Such a view seems to accord better with the apostle's language, than does the supposition that he sagaciously turned to his purpose the incident of his finding an altar erected to an unknown god, without the slightest reference, on the part of its builders, to the real God. It is worthy of distinct notice, that the apostle took not only an interesting, but also a wholly unexceptionable, way of making known the true God, and of vindicating his claims to men's worship. For, notwithstanding the willingness of the Athenians to make their city the seat of all the gods, it was a law that no new divinity should be introduced without the permission of the senate, or court, of the Areopagus. But Paul infringed upon no law, and could not therefore be exposed to an accusation of making known a new God, since he only undertook to show the character and vindicate the claims of one to whom he had found an altar already erected, but of whom the people were profoundly ignorant.
 || *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship;* whom, though ignorant of his character, you have honored with this external token of worship. The apostle did not mean to convey the idea that true worship was paid to this unknown God, but that religious respect was paid to him, so far, at least, as that an altar had been erected to him.—It is humbling to see how little human wisdom can avail, unaided by revelation, as to acquiring a correct knowledge of God.

24. The apostle then proceeded to unfold the nature of the true God and of the worship which is his due,

24 God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth,

to exhibit him as the great governor and benefactor of men, and their final judge. In this address (of which, however, we have probably only a summary), the apostle distinctly combated the chief errors of the philosophers in whose presence he was speaking, and those of the common people.

God, that made the world, and all things therein. To us the thought is perfectly familiar, that the universe was originally made by God, so that he is truly the Creator of the universe out of nothing. Yet this is a thought which the ancient philosophers had not acquired. If they acknowledged a God as concerned in producing and arranging the universe, they thought of him as an architect, disposing of materials already existing, rather than as an original creator of the materials themselves. Matter they mostly held to be eternal, as well as God himself; and the Epicureans, as has already been stated, believed the present world to have grown out of the casual concurrence of innumerable eternal atoms; while the Stoics taught that there are no beings but material substances, and that the active principle which pervades passive matter, and which may be called God, is the original fire. The apostle distinctly announced a real, personal God, who truly created the world and all things in it. || *Dwelleth not in temples made with hands.* Such was the influence of the prevalent idolatry, that the common people indulged the unworthy conception of gods who could be restricted to the narrow limits of a temple. But such an idea the apostle represented as totally unsuited to the Creator of all things. He, the possessor and governor of heaven and earth, is confined to no place. These gross ideas respecting God were opposed, however, by some of the philosophers, who put the inquiry — How

dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with

the Deity could be shut up in temples? In distinction from the low and unworthy conceptions of the divine Being which prevailed among the people, — at least, in heathen countries, — it is interesting and instructive to notice the thought which was made familiar to all classes among the Jews, as expressed in Solomon's dedicatory prayer (1 Kings 8 : 27) — “But will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee! how much less this house which I have builded!” Nor can we fail to recall here our Lord's declaration in John 4 : 23, 24 — “God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

25. *Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing; more correctly, Nor is served, or ministered unto, by men's hands.* Allusion was made to the heathen modes of worship, in which sacrifices and offerings of various sorts were made to the gods, prompted by the idea that the gods had bodily organs and appetites which needed such offerings; and that they were appeased by the offering, or were made angry by the withholding of these gifts. It was a current notion among the heathens that the gods fed on the fumes of sacrifices. The true God is not thus served, or ministered unto, by men; he is a spirit, independent of men, not needing any thing that mortals can offer. Compare Ps. 50 : 12—14. || *Seeing he giveth to all, &c.* So far from his being dependent on men, they are wholly dependent on him for all things; he being the author of their life, and giver of all their benefits. || *Life and breath.* The true God gives men life, and sustains the vital breath. How different the apostle's view from that which prevailed among the heathen! The true God is the creator and upholder of men,

men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath

giving them all their blessings, and in no wise dependent on them. The heathen common people, on the contrary,—such were their low and confused notions,—conceived of the gods as participating in many of the imperfections, and even vices, of men.

26. *And hath made of one blood all nations, &c.* Here, again, the apostle sought to correct a foolish and hurtful error of the Athenians. They regarded themselves as eminently superior, in respect to their origin, to all other people, in consequence of their having, according to their favorite view, sprung out of the soil of Attica, and thus highly distinguished from other people, who became possessors of the countries they inhabited, by invasion or conquest. On the contrary, Paul affirmed that all men sprang from one common stock, and are to be traced to the same original pair, constituting one race. All nations of men have a common blood-relationship to the first progenitor. || *To dwell on all the face of the earth.* The various nations, descended from a common parental stock, and being therefore kindred to one another, the common Creator designed to be spread over all the earth, as joint possessors of the world. || *And hath determined the times before appointed, &c.* As the nations are here spoken of, the apostle had reference, probably, to the times of the rise and fall of nations. These were determined, or appointed, by the great Governor of all the nations. He, too, as being the God of providence, had marked the places where their abode should be, and the extent of their territories.—Men of all nations, however different in government, intelligence, complexion, and other outward circumstances, had a common progenitor,

determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be

and ought to cherish the feeling that they are brethren. What a different aspect would the world assume, if this principle were acknowledged! How would it banish cruelty and oppression, and introduce friendship and a universal desire to seek one another's good!

27. The design of God in furnishing these proofs of his existence and providential care is now stated. — *That they might seek the Lord;* seek a knowledge of his character and will, and seek his favor. || *If haply they might feel after him, and find him.* By searching for knowledge of God, and for his favor, they would succeed in finding him. The idea presented by the apostle, seems to be that of a person feeling around him for some object of interest which is really near him, and, having lighted on it, to keep hold of it, feeling it again and again, and becoming assured that he has found it. So God has spread all around men evidences of his being and of his kind care, to excite their attention to himself, so that they may seek knowledge of him, and, by following the intimations which he gives, may come to a true acquaintance with his character and will. || *Though he be not far from every one of us.* God has so constituted us, and placed us in such circumstances, that searching for him is necessary, though, indeed, he is constantly near every one of us, and therefore the manifestations of his being and of his will are not to be sought from afar. He is near to every one; all around us, as we may say, and within us; so that if any one honestly and earnestly seeks, he will not feel after God in vain, but will attain the object of his search, and have gratifying evidence that he has found it.

not far from every one of us :
 28 For in him we live, and

28. *For in him we live*, &c. As showing that God is very near to every one of us, the apostle affirmed our entire dependence on him, and the most intimate connection which subsists between him and us in regard to our life, our power of action, and our whole being, both bodily and spiritual. So intimately connected with God are we in these respects, that he is the ground on which our existence rests, the source whence we have proceeded, and from which all our activity is constantly supplied, and which is essential to our whole being. This remark of the apostle was brought forward to confirm his view of God's being *very near to each one of us*. While, then, it proves, in general, our entire dependence on God, and shows that it is *by him* we exist and exert our faculties, it means still more. It shows an intimate relation, sustained by God towards us in respect to our being, and our dependence on him, as an ever-present and all-surrounding spirit, by whose agency our life is sustained, our powers exert themselves, and our whole being, in all its parts, both animal and spiritual, is upheld. The idea of the apostle is similar to that conveyed in the 139th psalm, which celebrates the omnipresence of God; and particularly may we compare with the apostle's declaration, the words of the psalmist in the fifth verse of the psalm just mentioned—“Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;” and in vs. 7—10—“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” The language of the apostle is more definite and exact than that of the psalmist, in affirming the upholding efficiency of God,

move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have

by which our powers and our very being are sustained, without which, in other words, we could not have our being. There is another passage, which it may not be amiss to introduce, as tending to illustrate the apostle's language, namely, Jer. 23: 24—“Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” In other words, God is every where, an all-pervading spirit; and all creatures are—so to speak—enclosed within the embrace of his presence, so that we are in him. No language, nor illustrations, can do any justice to this subject; and we may well adopt the declaration of the psalmist in Ps. 139: 6—“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” || *As certain also of your own poets have said*, &c. As still further impressing this idea of our dependence on God, and of our being sustained by his constant agency, the apostle referred with approbation to a sentiment expressed by some of the Greek poets, with whom his hearers were familiar. These poets spoke of men as being the offspring of God; and thus they showed whence men's being originated, and men's intimate connection with God, as to their life and powers, and their being sustained from day to day. As, the child is sustained by the parent, so, though far more intimately, are we sustained by God. As, in a well-regulated family, the father is the head, whose influence extends to all the members, and is felt in all the movements of the family, and whose presence and constant agency are essential to its well-being, so, though unspeakably more really and intimately, do we subsist and act by virtue of a connection with the ever-present and ever-sustaining Father of all. The nature of this connection is to us inexplicable. The fact only is asserted by the apostle; and it is an exceedingly important truth, as showing the duty of seeking a correct knowledge of God, and an interest in his favor, and as

said, For we are also his offspring. showing encouragement to seek ; for God is inconceivably near to us, and will second every sincere endeavor to learn his will. The poets, whose language the apostle here quoted, were particularly Aratus of Cilicia, who flourished about two hundred and seventy-seven years before Christ, and Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher, as well as poet, and the successor of Zeno. Cleanthes died about two hundred and forty years before the Christian era. Both of these writers employed expressions such as the apostle has quoted, in poems composed to the honor of Jupiter, whom the ancients often styled *father of gods and men*. What they said of him whom they described as the supreme, Paul transferred to the true God, and would thus prepare his hearers for fuller disclosures respecting the claims of the true God.

The Hymn of Cleanthes is a remarkable production. Its sentiments are, in general, so just and elevated, that I have thought it would well comport with the design of these Notes to introduce it here. The following excellent version of it was made by Gilbert West, LL. D., a learned English writer, from whose volume of Translations I have extracted it. In the seventh and eighth lines the reader will observe the sentiment which the apostle brought forward.

THE HYMN OF CLEANTHES.

O, under various sacred names adored !
Divinity supreme ! all-potent Lord !
Author of nature ! whose unbounded sway
And legislative power all things obey !
Majestic Jove ! all hail ! To thee belong
The suppliant prayer and tributary song,
To thee from all thy mortal offspring due.
From thee we came, from thee our being drew :
Whatever lives and moves, great Sire ! is
thine,
Embodyed portions of the soul divine.

Therefore to thee will I attune my string,
And of thy wondrous power forever sing.
The wheeling orbs, the wandering fires above,
That round this earthly sphere incessant
move,

29 Forasmuch then as we are

Through all this boundless world admit thy
sway,
And roll spontaneous where thou point'st the
way.
Such is the awe impressed on nature round,
When through the void thy dreadful thunders
sound,
Those flaming agents of thy matchless power,
Astonished worlds hear, tremble, and adore.

Thus paramount to all, by all obeyed,
Ruling that Reason, which, through all con-
veyed,
Informs this general mass, thou reign'st
adored,
Supreme, unbounded, universal Lord.
For, nor in earth, nor earth-encircling floods,
Nor yon ethereal pole, the seat of gods,
Is aught performed without thy aid divine ;
Strength, wisdom, virtue, mighty Jove, are
thine !

Vice is the act of man, by passion tost,
And in the shoreless sea of folly lost.
But thou what vice disorders canst compose,
And profit by the malice of thy foes ;
So blending good with evil, fair with foul,
As thence to model one harmonious whole,
One universal law of truth and right.
But wretched mortals shun the heavenly
light ;
And, though to bliss directing still their
choice,
Hear not, or heed not, Reason's sacred voice,
That common guide, ordained to point the
road
That leads obedient man to solid good.
Thence, quitting virtue's lovely paths, they
rove,

As various objects various passions move.
Some, through opposing crowds 'and threatening war,
Seek power's bright throne, and fame's tri-
umphal car ;
Some, bent on wealth, pursue, with endless
pain,
Oppressive, sordid, and dishonest gain ;
While others, to soft indolence resigned,
Drown in corporeal sweets th' immortal
mind.

But, O great Father, thunder-ruling God !
Who in thick darkness mak'st thy dread
abode !
Thou, from whose bounty all good gifts de-
scend,
Do thou from ignorance mankind defend.
The clouds of vice and folly, O, control,
And shed the beams of wisdom on the soul —

the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Those radiant beams, by whose all-piercing flame,
Thy justice rules this universal frame,
That, honored with a portion of thy light,
We may essay thy goodness to requite
With honorary songs and grateful lays,
And hymn thy glorious works with ceaseless
praise —

The proper task of man: and, sure, to sing
Of nature's laws, and nature's mighty King,
Is bliss supreme. Let gods with mortals
join!

The subject may transport a breast divine!

29. *Forasmuch then, &c.* The apostle now draws a conclusion respecting the nature of the true God, and applies his preceding statement to the erroneous practices of the Athenians, as worshippers of idols. Since we are God's offspring, and have received from him a living, spiritual nature, how improper is it in us to conceive of God, our great Father, as resembling any lifeless material substance, however shaped and adorned it may be by human ingenuity! and how improper is an image of gold, or silver, to be used as a representation of Him who is the Father of our spiritual natures, and who must be a greater and nobler Spirit than ourselves! Unite with this thought the apostle's previous declaration, that God is most intimately present with *every one*, as the giver and constant sustainer of his whole being, and therefore every where present as an all-surrounding Spirit, of most perfect knowledge, and of ceaseless agency, and how utterly contrary to right and to propriety it is, to consider an image a fit representation of such a being! || *We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, &c.*; the Deity is not like unto gold, &c. See, for an impressive exhibition of the absurdity of image-worship, Is. 40: 18—20. 44: 10—20. 46: 1, 2, 6, 7. Jer. 10: 3—5.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

30. *The times of this ignorance*; the time, thus far, during which this ignorant and unworthy mode of pretended worship has been practised. The apostle uses a soft expression, putting men's absurd idolatries to the account of their ignorance respecting God. This ignorance, however, was so connected with moral depravity, that it could not be an *adequate* excuse. Hence the apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans (1: 20—23), says, that men were “without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,” &c. || *God winked at*; God overlooked, acted as if he did not notice men's wickedness; that is, he forbore to punish it; he treated the ignorant nations with great lenity, and did not so directly, as he now does, proclaim his will to the nations. Compare 14: 16. Not that he viewed with indifference the idolatry into which the nations had plunged themselves, but he mercifully forbore in regard to it. There was an important object, also, to be gained by God's forbearing to punish the nations, and allowing them “to walk in their own ways” (14: 16); namely, the tendency of the human soul, in regard to religion, would thus be made manifest; it would become perfectly obvious that man, by his own wisdom, would not attain to right conceptions of God, and of the proper way of worshipping him, and to right feelings towards him. The need of a divine Teacher and Redeemer would be made plain. The time had been fixed, however, when a new era should be introduced, and God should clearly and fully reveal his will, exposing the sinfulness of men, and calling the nations from their idolatry to just views and to acceptable worship. This the apostle proceeds to show. || *Now commandeth all men*

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the

world in righteousness, by *that* man whom he hath ordained:

every where to repent. Idolatry of some kind was every where practised, except among the Jews; but now, since Jesus has appeared, men are required to turn from it, and from all sin, with heartfelt penitence and reformation. Every where, not merely in one favored nation, but for the benefit of the world, God has sent forth his message, calling on men to renounce their sinful and unworthy courses. It is implied here, as was fully stated by the apostle on other occasions, that men's repentance of their sins would assuredly be followed by forgiveness.—Let us lay to heart, that *ours* are not times of ignorance. The true light is not only come into the world, but on us its brightest rays are shed. Let us follow it, that we may arrive at endless bliss. Alas! how great will be our condemnation, if we love darkness rather than light! See John 3: 19.

31. *Because he hath appointed a day, &c.* The apostle presented to the Athenians a motive suited, if rightly apprehended, to lead them to renounce their unworthy opinions and their sinful practices. He declared to them that a day of judgment had been appointed, in which all men will be brought to a just trial, and be dealt with, for their conduct on earth, according to righteous principles. Repentance is, of course, indispensable to a preparation for that day, since, without holiness of character and the favor of God, future bliss cannot be attained. A righteous judgment must issue unfavorably to those who continue in their sins. || *By that man whom he hath ordained;* whom he hath appointed to the office of Judge of the human race; namely, Jesus Christ. Compare Matt. 25: 31, &c. John 5: 22, 27. Acts 10: 42. 2 Cor. 5: 10. || *Whereof he hath given assurance;* hath given sure evidence. || *In that he hath raised him from the dead.* The proof which the apostle presented to the Athenians, that Jesus Christ had been

appointed the Judge of men, consisted in the fact, which he distinctly announced, that Jesus had been raised up from the dead. A most remarkable statement must this have appeared to any serious-minded persons in the assembly. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, never again to become subject to death, was a most striking fact in regard to him, and evidently marked him out as appointed to an unusual office. Jesus came from God, promised, indeed, to the Jews, as one that should spring from their nation, but designed to be the Author of blessings to the human race at large, and to be the Head of a spiritual family whose members should be gathered from every nation. As bearing a commission to bless the whole race with a new and spiritual religion, he was also to be the Judge of the whole race. The resurrection from the dead was the crowning evidence of his being what he claimed to be (Rom. 1: 4); and this same event consequently proved him to be He who was appointed to judge the world.

At this stage of his address, the apostle was probably interrupted, and hindered from completing the course of thought on which he had entered. The mention of *a resurrection from the dead* excited contempt and ridicule in some parts of the assembly; and the whole matter had assumed a more serious and convincing air than the philosophers had anticipated. They, and doubtless others, were willing to be released from further hearing so penetrating a discourse in opposition to their errors and sins. It would have been extremely gratifying to know how the apostle would have proceeded in addressing such an assembly, composed of heathens and of professed philosophers, on the distinctive features of the gospel. He had, thus far in his address, been occupied with topics pertaining to natural religion, and had just come to a most interesting point, where we

whereof he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will

may suppose he would have introduced the name of Jesus, and entered on the proof of his having been sent from God with the revelation of life and immortality, as the Author of a new religion, as the Saviour and the final Judge of men. We know what was Paul's manner of proving the Messiahship and authority of Jesus, when arguing with Jews who received the Old Testament and were expecting the Messiah; namely, by showing the fulfilment of prophecy in Jesus. See chapters 13th and 14th. A somewhat different mode of reasoning would, doubtless, have been presented to the Athenians, as, in respect to religion, they occupied wholly different ground from that of the Jews; and we cannot but lament that we have not a specimen of the wise manner in which the apostle would have adapted himself to such an audience. In reasoning with the Athenians, it would hardly have been appropriate, as it was in reasoning with the Jews, to appeal at once and directly to the Old Testament, as an acknowledged revelation from God. Substantial proofs, of a somewhat different nature, would have been needed in order to maintain the authority of Jesus as the great Teacher and Saviour. Such proofs the apostle would have brought. But we must submit; thankful for the monuments which remain of his inspired wisdom and ability to vindicate the truth as it is in Jesus.

32. *And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, &c.* To some the idea of a resurrection from the dead appeared so contrary to their notions of death, and of the destiny of human beings, that they regarded it unworthy of their attention, and deserving only to be scoffed at. Others, however, expressed their dissent in a more courteous manner. Feeling an

hear thee again of this *matter*.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Are-

aversion to the apostle's views, and especially to his declaration concerning the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and inclined to listen no longer to such sentiments, yet unwilling to treat him rudely, they gave him a polite hint that they had heard him enough for the present; by and by, *perhaps*, they would hear him again. Had they really wished to hear more from Paul, they would not have declined hearing him further on this occasion. He had not wearied their patience, and they were not pressed for want of time. v. 21. That the latter mentioned persons, as well as the former, were desirous to cut short the apostle's address, though in the least offensive manner that propriety would allow, and with the politeness for which Athens was famed, appears from the contrast between them and the persons mentioned in the 34th verse, who sought his company still longer, and from the fact that Paul so soon left the city. See 18:1. He felt that there was no particular encouragement for his labors there. The people there were too wise in their own esteem to regard what they would stigmatize as the foolishness of the gospel. 1 Cor. 1:18—21.

33. *Paul departed from among them; from the company assembled on Mars-hill.*

34. *Certain men clave unto him, and believed.* Some of the hearers were favorably impressed by the apostle's instructions, and really wished for additional opportunities of listening to him. They sought his company, and under his teaching became disciples of Christ. || *Dionysius the Areopagite*; a member of the Athenian court, or, the Areopagus. Compare on v. 19. His belonging to this court shows him to have been one of the most eminent citizens; for its

opagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

3 Paul laboreth with his hands, and preacheth at Corinth to the Gentiles. 9 The Lord encourageth him in a vision. 12 He is accused before Gallio the deputy, but is dismissed. 18 Afterwards passing from city to city, he strengtheneth the disciples.

members were selected from the best families, and were men of high reputation. Eusebius, the early ecclesiastical historian, relates that this man became a distinguished minister of the gospel in Athens; and another early writer, that he died a violent death as a Christian martyr. The statements are not improbable; yet full reliance cannot always be placed on such traditions. || *Damaris*. Nothing further is known of this person than what is here stated. She was, doubtless, as would appear from the fact of her name being singled out for preservation, a person of distinction,

CHAPTER XVIII.

1. *After these things*; the occurrences in Athens, related in the preceding chapter. After the address on Mars-hill, the apostle appears to have soon left Athens. || *Corinth*; a distinguished city of Greece, and capital of Achaia, which was a region of Greece. See on v. 12. Corinth was west from Athens, lying between two gulfs, Lepanto and Egina, one proceeding from the Egean sea on the east, and the other from the Ionian sea on the west. It had two ports, or towns connected with it as seaports; Lechæum on the west, and Cenchrea on the east. This splendid city was destroyed in war by Mummius, a Roman general, one hundred and forty-six years before Christ. A hundred years after, it was restored by Julius Cesar, who settled in it a Roman colony; and it soon recovered its ancient splendor. It was the residence of the Roman pro-consul of the provinces, and became highly distinguished for the opulence of its citizens, and its cultivation of the arts. It was so eminent, as to be

24 Apollos, being more perfectly instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, 28 preacheth Christ with great efficacy.

AFTER these things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Clau-

spoken of by ancient writers in the most extravagant terms, as *the light of all Greece*, and *the glory of Greece*. It was celebrated for the worship of the heathen goddess Venus, and for the prevalence of debauchery.

2. *And found a certain Jew named Aquila*. The account seems to imply that Aquila was already a Christian. Perhaps he was a professed Christian in Rome, before leaving that city; for it is supposed that the gospel was early made known there, perhaps by some who had been converted in Jerusalem at the time of the Pentecost (Acts, 2d chapter), or by some Jews, converted at a later date, who either had occasion to visit Rome for purposes of trade, or who had taken up their abode there. *Aquila* is properly a Roman name; and it was customary among the Jews, when resident in foreign parts, to assume a name adapted to the language of the country. Both Aquila and his wife Priscilla are mentioned by the apostle in the most honorable terms, as distinguished for their readiness to serve the cause of Christ. See Rom. 16: 3, 4. 1 Cor. 16: 19. || *Pontus*; the north-eastern province of Asia Minor, on the southern coast of the Euxine, or Black sea. There were many Jews residing in Pontus. Compare Acts 2: 9. 1 Pet. 1: 1. Pontus was formerly a kingdom. It acquired much celebrity during the reign of Mithridates the Great, who was one of the most powerful enemies the Romans ever encountered. It was at length subdued by the Roman general Pompey, and reduced to the form of a province. || *Italy*; the country, of which Rome was the capital. || *Priscilla*; called also *Prisca*,

dius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought, (for by their oc-

in 2 Tim. 4: 19. || *Claudius*; one of the Roman emperors, the fifth in order from Julius Cesar. He reigned from the year of our Lord 41 to 54. He is the same as is mentioned in 11: 28. || *Commanded all Jews to depart from Rome*. Of such a decree by the emperor Claudius, the Roman historian Suetonius makes mention, and ascribes it to the disturbances which the Jews were frequently occasioning, He says, “*Claudius expelled from Rome the Jews, who were perpetually exciting tumults, instigated by one Chrestus.*” This word *Chrestus* was probably meant for *Christ*; and the name of the Saviour would, of course, be repeatedly employed among the Jews at Rome, in such a manner as that a Roman historian might easily mistake it for the name of a living leader. The language of Suetonius makes it altogether probable that the disturbances arose, in part at least, from religious disputes. As in Antioch the unbelieving Jews excited a tumult against Paul and Barnabas (13: 50), and in Lystra (14: 19), and afterwards against Paul in Thessalonica (17: 5) and in Berea (17: 13), so it is probable that the increase of believers in Rome was the occasion of Jews’ commencing angry disputes, which led to disturbance of the public peace. Hence, perhaps, the emperor’s decree for ridding the city of its disturbers. In such a decree, the Jewish Christians would be included, as really as other Jews, because the Romans made no distinction at that time between the two companies, regarding them, probably, as rival sects of the same religion. — Aquila and Priscilla afterwards returned to Rome (see Rom. 16: 3); the decree having respect, perhaps, to a limited time, or being afterwards revoked.

3. *He was of the same craft*; of the same trade as Aquila. It was a cus-

cipation they were tent-makers.)

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedo-

tom among the Jews, that every one should learn some trade, so as to be able, in case of necessity, to support himself by manual labor. Those who devoted themselves to study in early life, as Paul did (22: 3), also learned a trade. || *They were tent-makers.* This occupation was a sure source of support, tents being in constant demand for the use of armies, and for convenience in travelling. Public houses and accommodations for travellers were, at that time, comparatively rare. Perhaps Paul purposed to spend a considerable time in Corinth. It was so large and commercial a city, and resorted to so much from all quarters, that it was evidently of the first importance to secure for the gospel a lodgment there. It was the part of wisdom thus to plant the gospel in large cities. From them, as from centres of influence, a knowledge of the Saviour would be more rapidly and more effectually extended. The apostle, therefore, willingly embraced the opportunity of working at his trade in company with these Christian friends, for the sake of an honorable subsistence, and of preventing himself from being burdensome to any one. Compare 2 Cor. 11: 9.

4. *Reasoned*. See on 17: 2. || *Per-suaded the Jews and the Greeks*; convinced them of the Messiahship of Jesus, and persuaded them to embrace the gospel. As the *Greeks* here spoken of were associated with Jews in attending on the services of the synagogue, it is altogether probable they had become proselytes, partially at least, to the Jewish religion. Compare 17: 17.

5. *When Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia*. These assistants of Paul had been left in Berea of Macedonia, when he himself left that place for Athens. He had also directed that they should rejoin him

nia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews, *that Jesus was Christ.*

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he

as soon as possible. See 17: 14, 15. As his stay in Athens was short, they did not rejoin him until after his arrival in Corinth. || *Paul was pressed in spirit*; anxious and distressed in mind. Such was the spiritual state of the people of Corinth, and such the unwillingness of the Jews in general to receive the gospel, that Paul was weighed down with solicitude. His anxiety to enter more fully on his appropriate work of preaching the gospel was greatly increased after the arrival of Silas and Timotheus; since, in consequence of their arrival, his plans could be enlarged; and every step he took made him more acquainted with the state of the people, and the need of Christian efforts. Among the Jews he found, too, a spirit of opposition to the gospel, which filled him with grief. || *Testified that Jesus was Christ*; that Jesus was the Messiah. He had, of course, dwelt on this point before the arrival of Silas and Timotheus. But after their arrival, he gave himself up more thoroughly to his apostolic work (compare v. 3), and with increased earnestness insisted on the claims of Jesus as the Messiah, and the need of embracing his religion.

6. *When they — blasphemed*; reviled, calumniated. Compare 13: 45. They not only refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, but indulged in reproachful and reviling language, perhaps against both the Saviour and the apostle. The same spirit which made the Jews in Palestine revile the Saviour himself, and accuse him of being in league with Satan (Matt. 12: 24), and of being a deceiver (John 7: 12; compare John 7: 20. 8: 4s), was cherished by the Jews of Corinth. || *He shook his raiment*; and thus signified to the Jews his deep abhorrence of their conduct, and his unwillingness to be

shook *his raiment*, and said unto them, *Your blood be upon your own heads*: *I am clean*: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

longer intimately associated with them. The very dust which had fallen on his clothes since he had been in their company, he would not allow to remain on him, so that he might decidedly show himself not to be one of them, now that they had in so open and determined a manner refused to have any connection with Jesus. The meaning of this act is the same as of that mentioned in 13: 51, when Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust from their feet as a testimony against the unbelieving Jews of Antioch. Compare, also, Matt. 10: 14. || *Your blood be upon your own heads*; your ruin will be chargeable to yourselves alone; be you yourselves answerable for your destruction. The word *blood* was often used to denote *the shedding of a person's blood*, or *a person's death*, and the *guilt* connected with a person's being put to death. Compare 2 Sam. 1: 16. Ezek. 33: 4—6. Matt. 27: 25. So, here, the apostle warned the Jews that the guilt of their destruction would be their own. He viewed them as doomed to future perdition for their rejection of Jesus Christ (compare John 3: 36), and vividly expressed the thought that they themselves would be the cause of their destruction. Not to him could the blame of it be traced. He did not here express a wish that they might perish, and that they might contract the guilt of being their own destroyers. He merely declared the fact that their blood would be on their own heads, and deprecated any participation in such guilt.—WE, too, shall find it fatal to our best interests to refuse subjection to Christ; and on ourselves must rest the blame, if our souls are lost. || *I am clean*; I am free from guilt in regard to you. Compare 20: 26, 27. || *From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles*. As in Antioch of Pisidia,

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler

when the Jews steadily resisted Paul and Barnabas, and would not receive the gospel, Paul declared, "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (13: 46), so in Cerinth, having with great earnestness and assiduity attempted to persuade the Jews to embrace the gospel, and having met with a decided repulse, he determined to turn his attention to the Gentiles of Corinth. It had been his uniform practice, on arriving at a city, to resort to the synagogue, and present the gospel first to the Jews, and afterwards to address the Gentiles. Such continued to be his practice after the present date (see 19: 8. 23: 17); so that when he said, "From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles," he had particular reference to the Gentile inhabitants of Corinth. Frustrated, however, as he often was in his plans, and met by the Jews with so decided hostility, he yet never ceased to feel a special interest in their welfare, and a special desire that they might embrace the gospel. See Rom. 9: 3. 10: 1.

7. *And he departed thence; from the synagogue, not from the city. || Justus, one that worshipped God.* This expression was used to designate a person who had become a proselyte to Judaism, from among the Gentiles. See on 16: 14. Justus was a proselyte, who, as appears from Paul's repairing to his house on separating from the Jews, had become a Christian. Perhaps the house of Justus was a convenient place for holding Christian assemblies. Some suppose that the apostle changed his lodgings from the house of Aquila to that of Justus, preferring to be accommodated in the house of a Gentile, out of regard to the feelings of the Gentile population of Corinth,

of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not

who might feel a reluctance to visit the house of a Jew. At the same time, as the house of Justus was so near the synagogue, it would be convenient for any Jews to resort to, who might desire to converse with Paul. The sacred historian, however, does not give us the means of determining a point of this nature.

8. *Crispus.* He is also mentioned in 1 Cor. 1: 14, as one whom the apostle had baptized. || *The chief ruler of the synagogue.* See on 13: 15. || *Believed on the Lord with all his house.* He and all his family became Christians. Thus Paul's labors were not ineffectual even among the Jews. On more minds than one, the parting scene at the synagogue, or a report of it, may have produced a deep salutary impression. || *And many — hearing, believed, &c.* It is interesting to notice the order of events, which is here stated. These Corinthians first heard, then believed, then were baptized. The first ministers of Christ baptized those who believed, after having heard the gospel; nor does the New Testament record any facts which encourage the baptism of any but those who have heard and who profess to have received the gospel. The instances of success recorded in this verse are very cheering, when compared with the disheartening conduct of the Jews, as related in the sixth verse. God did not leave himself without special witness in Corinth. The chief ruler of the synagogue, a man of influence among the Jews, became a believer, with all his family; and many of the citizens of Corinth became avowed followers of Christ.

9. *Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision.* Compare 16: 9. Whether Paul was designing to leave Corinth or not, does not appear. He had endured much discouragement,

afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

though he had also been blessed with great success. It was specially important that Paul should be encouraged to continue his labors in this city. The Lord, therefore, gave him a clear intimation of his will, either changing a purpose which was forming in Paul's mind, or confirming his sense of duty to remain.

10. *For I am with thee.* The Saviour would fulfil his promise—"Lo, I am with you always." Matt. 28:20. || *No man shall set on thee, to hurt thee;* no man shall assail thee so as to injure thee. The idea was, that no real harm should happen to him. A spirit of opposition might show itself, as it actually did (v. 12), but without bad results to Paul. God will never desert his faithful servants, nor withhold from them any needed aid. || *For I have much people in this city;* there are many here whom I am designing to make my people. Compare 13:48. John 6:37. 10:16. 17:2. Thus even in luxurious and licentious Corinth, God had determined to form a people for his praise. The speculating, self-confident Athenians are passed by (17:32); perhaps to show that the wise in their own conceit are left to their own wisdom (Matt. 11:25); while Corinthians are brought to embrace the gospel, to show the power of divine grace in sanctifying and saving those who seem farthest from the kingdom of God. See 1 Cor. 6:9—11. Compare Matt. 21:31, 32.

12. *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia.* The Romans, when they acquired possession of Greece, divided it into two parts, or provinces, called, respectively, Macedonia and Achaia; each governed by an officer delegated for the purpose. Achaia was the

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat,

13 Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

more southern of these two provinces, and the one of which Corinth was the chief city. The Roman ruler of the province resided in Corinth. The word *deputy* is not sufficiently definite to convey the proper idea of Gallio's office; he was the governor of Achaia, appointed by the Roman senate, and called a *proconsul*. See on 13:7. Gallio, here mentioned, was a younger brother of the celebrated philosopher Seneca. He has the reputation of having been a man of an exceedingly pleasant and kind disposition. || *The Jews made insurrection, &c.;* assaulted and apprehended Paul. For some time, the opposition of the Jews had been restrained; but taking some undue advantage, perhaps, of the known mildness and accommodating spirit of the proconsul, whom they supposed they might sway to their interests, they again ventured to assail him. It is generally agreed, too, that the events here related occurred at the entrance of Gallio on his proconsulship. The accession of a new officer, who was also a comparative stranger, was perhaps seized on as a fitting occasion to excite commotion against Paul. || *Brought him to the judgment-seat;* to Gallio's tribunal, or seat of justice, at which cases were tried.

13. *This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law;* that is, to the law of Moses. Throughout the Roman provinces, the Jews were permitted by the civil authorities to observe the law of Moses, without molestation. The Roman government protected them in their religious observances, and severely punished violations of the privilege which was thus secured to the Jews. The Jews of Corinth, therefore, laid charge

14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your

against Paul of disturbing their religious observances, seeking to set up a new kind of worship among them, and to entice them away from the law, which the Roman government had promised to protect. On the charge of interfering with privileges guaranteed to them by the imperial power, they arraigned him before Gallio. The groundlessness of the charge is at once obvious. Paul had not reviled the Jews, nor cast contempt on their practices or their law. He had not enticed away any from the synagogue. He had, as a preacher of the gospel, maintained the Messiahship of Jesus, and taught the inefficacy for salvation of the ceremonial law, and the necessity of faith in Christ. These views tended to withdraw those who embraced them, from reliance on existing Jewish practices; and hence Paul was accused of openly appearing among the Jews as an opposer of their law.

14. *When Paul was now about to open his mouth*; to defend himself from the accusation. || *Gallio said, &c.* Regarding the matter as not properly coming within his jurisdiction, he wished to cut it short; and, without waiting for Paul to speak, as he saw there was no ground for a civil process against him, he declared the case an unsuitable one to come before his tribunal. || *If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness*; if it were a crime, or an injurious misdemeanor. The word *lewdness* (see on 17:5) was formerly used in a more extensive signification than at present. The original word here corresponds sufficiently well to our term *civil misdemeanor*. || *Reason would that I should bear with you*; it would be reasonable that I should patiently

law, look ye *to it*: for I will be no judge of such *matters*.

16 And he drove them from the judgment-seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment-seat. And Gallio

listen to your complaints, and see justice done to you.

15. *If it be a question of words*; more properly, a question pertaining to religious doctrine. || *And names*. The names of Moses and Jesus, and the word *Messiah*, were here meant. These names were, doubtless, repeatedly mentioned by the Jews while stating their complaints; and Gallio was led to regard the whole matter as only a dispute about certain leaders, whom the different parties professed to follow, or a dispute whether the name *Messiah* belonged to Jesus, and whether Moses was to be treated with the accustomed reverence. || *Look ye to it*; settle it among yourselves. I will have nothing to do with it, as the proconsul of the province.

16. *He drove them*; he ordered them to depart.

17. *All the Greeks*. A crowd would naturally assemble on such an occasion. || *Took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue*. It appears from the eighth verse, that Crispus was, before his conversion, the chief ruler of the synagogue; probably Sosthenes was his successor. He, too, afterwards became a follower of Christ. See 1 Cor. 1:1. || *And beat him before the judgment-seat*. The Jews were very much disliked by the people of the Greek and Roman cities; and the latter were easily excited to treat them with indignity. Sosthenes was, on this occasion, the chief object of their rage and ill-treatment, perhaps because he was a person of distinction among the Jews; or, perhaps, as some suppose, he had taken an active part in these proceedings. On account of his being a person of note, disgrace,

cared for none of those things.

18 And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and

heaped on him would be the more felt by the Jews. The insult was an instantaneous outbreak of violent ill-will, and, when once commenced, would soon be joined in from all parts of the crowd. || *Gallio cared for none of those things*; none of the things which the Greeks were doing, contrary as they were to justice, and properly as a proconsul might interpose to protect an inhabitant of the city from violence, and to prevent a riot at the very seat of justice. Perceiving that the accusation against Paul was altogether an affair pertaining to the Jewish religion, and supposing it an idle dispute between two rival parties, not at all pertaining to the duties of a proconsul, he ordered the whole company away. The Greeks around then gave vent to their spleen against the Jews, by beating Sosthenes; and Gallio did not, at all, interpose to prevent such disorderly and violent proceedings. He was right in not listening to the complaints of the Jews against Paul; but he could not be justified in allowing the Greeks thus to abuse Sosthenes. It was, perhaps, the policy of some of the Roman governors to let the people of the Greek cities indulge their ill-will against the Jews. Such indulgences, occasionally, might make the people more quiet in their subjection to the Roman yoke; besides, the Roman governors themselves participated in these feelings of dislike, and were quite willing to connive at insults cast on Jews.

18. *And Paul — sailed thence into Syria*; the country in which Antioch was, whence Paul had started on this apostolical tour. See 15: 35, 36, 40. The sacred writer does not mean that Paul sailed directly to Syria; but he set sail for that country; stopping, however, at some places by the way. See vs. 19, 21, 22. || *Hating shorn his head*; having cut off his hair. Whether these words relate to Paul,

sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla, and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

as the chief subject of the writer's remarks, or to Aquila, cannot be wholly decided. There is, accordingly, a difference of judgment among good interpreters. The most obvious, and perhaps the most natural, reference is to Paul. But as Aquila's name is mentioned after Priscilla's, and the original Greek is here so constructed as to bring this clause, *hating shorn his head*, into near connection with Aquila's name, many writers infer that there was a special design in placing Aquila's name *after* that of his wife, in order that this clause might relate to him. They think, too, it is far more probable that Aquila would voluntarily take on him a vow, than that Paul would. On the contrary, other writers maintain that, besides the more obvious reference of the clause to Paul, no reason appears why such a circumstance should be so particularly recorded of Aquila, unless, perhaps, it be that this vow proved an occasion of Paul's tarrying longer than he otherwise would have staid. And as the vow was, in reality, a matter of indifference in itself, Paul may, without impropriety, be believed to have made it. He afterwards, we know, became associated in a vow; not, however, as an act of his own suggestion, but at the recommendation of the apostle James, and of the elders in Jerusalem. See 21: 23, 24. As to the mention of Aquila's name *after* that of his wife, though we might expect the husband's name first, and though it is used first in the 26th verse, yet the same order of statement, as is here employed, is found also in Rom. 16: 3, and 2 Tim. 4: 19, without, so far as appears, any particular reason. This consideration, then, is destitute of weight. The question, however, is one of minor importance. || *In Cenchrea*; the seaport of Corinth on the east, and about eight miles from the city.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not:

See on v. 1. || *For he had a vow.* It was usual among the Jews, as also among some of the Gentiles, for a person in distress to make a vow, by which he promised, as an acknowledgment of the divine mercy, and a testimony of gratitude at being delivered from distress, to offer up his hair to God. Such a person would, consequently, let his hair grow for a suitable length of time; and then, cutting it off, offer it up solemnly to God, and thus discharge his obligation, or fulfil his vow. In the present case, Paul, or (if it be so) Aquila, seems to have imposed on himself such an obligation during some trouble which had befallen him; and when the time had expired for the hair to grow, and then to be offered, Paul sailed with Aquila and Priscilla in company.

19. *He came to Ephesus.* He touched at Ephesus on his way to Syria. This was a distinguished city on the western coast of Asia Minor, between Smyrna and Miletus. It was the capital of the region in which it was situated; and was styled, by some ancient writers, "the most illustrious;" and sometimes, "the ornament of Asia." It became the seat of one of the principal churches planted by the apostles. Rev. 1: 11. Splendid, however, as Ephesus was, it was doomed to decay; and it is now blotted out from the map of the world. || *And left them there;* he left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, while he prosecuted his voyage. Paul, however, had an opportunity of spending at least a sabbath there, which he occupied in his usual manner, discoursing to the Jews respecting the gospel. According to Josephus, Jews were very numerous in Ephesus, and enjoyed great privileges.

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

22 And when he had landed at

20. *When they desired, &c.;* that is, the Jews in whose synagogue Paul had preached.

21. *I must keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.* It was the Jewish passover, probably, that was approaching. And as this annual festival brought to Jerusalem large numbers of Jews from all parts of the world, it was a favorable opportunity for promoting the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. Many converted Jews from abroad would also go to Jerusalem at the same time; and much good might be done by encouraging the communication of the Christians in Jerusalem with those abroad. Paul's remark that he *must* keep this feast in Jerusalem arose simply from the fact that the arrangements he had made were such as required him to reach Jerusalem by the time of the festival; nor did he intend to convey the idea that he felt it his *duty* to *keep* the passover, like the mass of the Jews, as an act of religious obedience to the Mosaic law. It was a popular expression, equivalent simply to saying, I must be in Jerusalem at this festival.

22. *When he had landed at Cesarea.* We learn from the 18th verse, that Paul's ultimate destination was Syria; and from the 21st verse, that he had also formed the purpose of visiting Jerusalem. Cesarea was a city on the western coast of Palestine (8: 40), from which place he could easily go up to Jerusalem. || *And had gone up.* From the intimation in the preceding verse respecting Paul's purpose to visit Jerusalem, it is reasonable to believe that the *going up* here mentioned was his going up to Jerusalem, and not merely his going up to the city of Cesarea from the harbor. Luke is often very brief and comprehensive; and the word which he here

Cesarea, and gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went

uses was probably meant to refer to the intimation respecting Jerusalem in the preceding verse. When arrived at Cesarea, he was comparatively near Jerusalem, and would hardly fail, in accordance with his design, to go up without delay to that city. This, too, is the only stage mentioned in his progress, which would be a natural one for him to proceed from in order to go to Jerusalem. Besides, if reference be not made here to his visiting Jerusalem, there is no intimation of his passing through Jerusalem at all during this journey, as the next place which is mentioned is Antioch in Syria, his ultimate point of destination.

¶ *And saluted the church*; the church in Jerusalem. ¶ *He went down to Antioch*; to Antioch in Syria, where he had commenced, in company with Silas, this second apostolical tour. See 15: 36, 40.

The reader will find pleasure in tracing on the map this second tour of the apostle. He will see how diversified and extensive was the apostle's course; and how important were the places at which he was called to make known the gospel. His design was, in undertaking this tour, to visit and confirm in the Christian faith the churches which he had planted in his first tour with Barnabas. 15: 36. Taking Silas for his companion, he traversed Syria and Cilicia (15: 41), visited Derbe and Lystra, cities of Lycania (16: 1), and added Timothy to his company. Thence he went through Phrygia and Galatia. The providence of God now seemed adverse to his laboring further in those regions. But while in Troas (16: 8), a divine communication directed him to pass over into Macedonia, thus pointing him to Europe as a new field for his labors. He and his company, to whom Luke was now added, accordingly visited various cities in Macedonia. 16: 11,

over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

24 And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an

12. 17: 1, 10. From Macedonia he proceeded south to Achaia, visiting particularly Athens (17: 15) and Corinth (18: 1); at which latter place he found Aquila and Priscilla, and was rejoined by Silas and Timotheus, whom he had left at Berea, Luke having probably been left in Philippi. And from Corinth, after signal success in his labors, he returned to Antioch in Syria, by the way of Ephesus (18: 19), Cesarea (18: 22), and, in all probability, Jerusalem.

23. *He departed*; on his third excursion for preaching the gospel. The zealous spirit of the apostle, and his sense of responsibility and of gratitude to the Saviour, would not allow him to remain away from his appropriate work of spreading the gospel and planting churches. He, doubtless, remained in Antioch only long enough to recruit his strength, to attend to such official affairs as could be performed at Antioch as well as elsewhere, and to make arrangements for another journey. His happiness consisted in doing the will of Him that sent him. John 4: 34. Ease and comfort were not familiar words with him, as to his use of time. The fields were white unto the harvest (John 4: 35); and he was impatient to be thrusting in the sickle.

¶ *Galatia and Phrygia*; provinces in Asia Minor. See 16: 6. ¶ *Strengthening all the disciples*; confirming them in the faith of the gospel.

24. The sacred writer now briefly interrupts his narrative of Paul's labors, to relate a deeply-interesting incident respecting Aquila and Priscilla, whom the apostle had left at Ephesus. See 19th verse. While at Ephesus, they became acquainted with Apollos—a Jew of much piety and zeal, and readiness to speak in public on religious subjects. He was, however, not yet fully acquainted with the facts respecting

eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord: and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the

Jesus, and he needed instruction. Aquila and Priscilla met with him at the Jewish synagogue (v. 26); and their becoming acquainted with him was highly opportune. They gave him all needed instruction concerning the Saviour; and from the brethren in Ephesus he was introduced and recommended to the brethren in Achaia, where he was eminently useful as a preacher of the gospel.—*Alexandria*; a distinguished city in the north of Egypt, on the coast of the Mediterranean sea. It was founded by Alexander the Great, three hundred and thirty years before Christ, and became the centre of commercial intercourse between the eastern and the western world. It was an exceedingly prosperous city, and numbered, at one time, six hundred thousand inhabitants. In the year of our Lord 26, it fell into the power of the Romans. Large numbers of Jews had their abode there.

|| *An eloquent man.* Compare the 28th verse. Apollos acquired much renown for eloquence among the first Christians, and was preferred, by some, on account of his power in speaking, before the apostle Paul. See 1 Cor. 3:4. 4:6. || *Mighty in the scriptures;* well acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and possessing great ability in explaining them.

25. *This man was instructed in the way of the Lord;* or, in the doctrine concerning the Messiah. In this, Apollos had been correctly taught, so as to be expecting the Messiah's speedy advent. He was not, as yet, aware that the Messiah had actually come. || *Being fervent in the spirit;* being of an ardent and zealous spirit. || *Knowing only the baptism of John.* The baptism of John is here put for all the ministry of John the Baptist, and all the doctrines he taught.

Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: Whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and ex-

Apollos had known that John the Baptist had appeared, with a commission from God (John 1:6), as the forerunner of the Messiah; that he had inculcated on the Jews the necessity of repentance (Luke 3:3—14), and enjoined on them the duty of baptism, with confession of their sins, and an engagement to receive the coming Messiah. Beyond this point, his knowledge had not yet reached; but, as far as he knew, he enforced the truth on the Jews whom he met in his travels. How he obtained his knowledge of John the Baptist, and his correct, though imperfect, views of the Messiah, we are not informed. He may have acquired them from some Jew who had become a disciple of John, and whose residence, or business, was at a distance from Judea, and brought him to an acquaintance with Apollos; or, he may himself have visited Judea during John's ministry, and been convinced by his preaching and by a careful study of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, so as to become a true disciple of John, holding himself in readiness for the Messiah's advent, and seeking to prepare others for it by explaining the ancient prophecies, and inculcating penitence and amendment of life.

26. *Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard.* Aquila and his wife attended the synagogue worship in the cities where they happened to be. In this way they became acquainted with Apollos. They perceived his deficiency of religious knowledge, while they admired his zeal in seeking to benefit his countrymen. || *They—expounded unto him the way of God, &c.;* they explained to him fully the true doctrine which God had sent. They explained to him the gospel, made him acquainted with

pounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was

the character and claims of Jesus, with the facts respecting his birth, life and death, and resurrection, so that Apollos saw, and at once admitted, the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah.

REMARKS. 1. There may be true piety with much deficiency of knowledge. The heart may be, even eminently, right, while circumstances may have been such as to keep a person in ignorance of some most important religious points. But if the heart is right, there is a preparation to receive the truth on its being presented with the appropriate evidence. A renewed heart is, indeed, the best preparation to discern and receive religious truth.

2. The society and friendship of pious persons is mutually beneficial. Men of eminent natural endowments and general knowledge, may still find advantage from intercourse with pious persons in humble life. Let us always welcome the truth, by whomsoever communicated.

27. *And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia.* Apollos appears to have been travelling from place to place, spreading abroad the convictions and sentiments which he was cherishing. Now that he had received new light, and could announce a Saviour as *being come*, rather than as *to come*, he would be inspired with new zeal in spreading the joyful intelligence. Achaia was the province in which Corinth was situated, and in which Aquila and Priscilla had resided (18: 1, 2), and where Apollos would find an ample field of evangelical labor, as well as need of promoting the cause of Christ, which had gained a foothold there. *|| The brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples, &c.* The Christians

come, helped them much which had believed through grace.

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the scriptures, that Jesus was Christ.

in Ephesus furnished Apollos with a recommendatory letter to the brethren in Achaia, and particularly, we may believe from 19: 1, in Corinth. *|| Who — helped them much, which had believed through grace.* Apollos contributed greatly to the spiritual benefit of those who, through the grace, or favor, of God, had become Christians. To God's merciful influence on their souls is the event ascribed, of their having become believers in Christ. In various ways, the New Testament teaches us our dependence on God for a pious disposition, as well as for external blessings; and with what gratitude ought we to contemplate the grace of God in turning our hearts to himself, and inclining us to receive Jesus as our Saviour and Lord! Compare John 6: 37, 44, 45. 1 Cor. 3: 6. 15: 10. Eph. 2: 4, 5, 8, 9.

28. *He mightily convinced the Jews.* The idea of the original is, that, in discussion with the Jews, Apollos powerfully refuted them. He was an able champion for the Christian cause against the Jews. Many were convinced by his arguments, and were persuaded to receive the religion of Jesus. *|| Showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.* By comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament with the events pertaining to Jesus, he refuted the Jewish errors, and made it evident that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah.

The inspired account of Apollos shows us that a deep acquaintance with the word of God is of singular value in promoting the cause of religion. The gifts of powerful reasoning and of eloquence are, also, eminently serviceable endowments for the Christian ministry. They ought to be sought and diligently cultivated by ministers of the gospel; for success in winning men to Christ,

CHAPTER XIX.

6 The Holy Ghost is given by Paul's hands.
 9 The Jews blaspheme his doctrine, which is confirmed by miracles. 13 The Jewish exorcists 16 are beaten by the devil. 19 Conjuring books are burnt. 24 Demetrius, for love of gain, raiseth an uproar against Paul, 35 which is appeased by the town-clerk.

as well as in secular affairs, is connected with the use of means appropriate to instruction, conviction, and persuasion. At the same time, we must pay honor to God, and with humble gratitude acknowledge the power of divine grace in inclining men to become followers of Christ. The servants of God may plant and water; but it is He that giveth the increase. Ver. 27, compared with 1 Cor. 3: 6. We cannot but reflect with gratitude on the fact, that such men as Paul and Apollos were called by divine grace, and set to guard the rising interest of the gospel, and to devote their powerful minds and fervent hearts to its promotion. O for thousands in the ministry, of similar attainments in divine knowledge, and of like spirit towards all men!

CHAPTER XIX.

1. *While Apollos was at Corinth.* Apollos had been purposing to go into Achaia (18: 27); and as Corinth was the chief city of that province, he directed to that city his principal attention. || *Paul having passed through the upper coasts;* or sections of country. In 18: 23, it is stated that Paul was traversing the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia. These were inland provinces, situated high up from the Mediterranean sea and from the Egean sea. See the map. Having passed through these upper, or more northern regions, he now came to Ephesus, which was on the sea-coast, and lower down the country, as we generally say. See on 18: 19. || *Came to Ephesus;* as he had promised to do, by leave of divine providence. See 18: 21. || *Finding certain disciples.* It appears from the following verses, that

AND it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him,

these persons had not yet become acquainted with the fact that Jesus had appeared as the Messiah. They could not, then, strictly speaking, be called *disciples of Jesus*. But the name *disciples* was appropriate to them, because, besides believing, with other Jews, that the Messiah was to come, they had been baptized on profession of repentance, and of holding themselves ready to receive the Messiah, as soon as they should know of his having come. They were pious men, not yet instructed in regard to the Lord Jesus, but ready to submit themselves to him, as soon as the proofs of his Messiahship should be presented to them. As Luke, also, wrote this account several years after the event, and the men were evidently pious, the word *disciples* would naturally occur to him, as a suitable epithet, even before they were properly instructed concerning Jesus, and were baptized as his followers.

2. *Hare ye received the Holy Ghost, &c.* Reference was had, in this inquiry, not to the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, since these men are here spoken of as *having believed*; but to the extraordinary influences of the Spirit which in that age were bestowed on believers. Compare 2: 4. 8: 14—17. 10: 44—46. || *Since ye believed?* As they were a religious company, distinct from the great body of the Jews, Paul naturally addressed them as believers in Jesus. He was not yet aware of the peculiarity of their case. || *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* The term *Holy Spirit* was so common among the Jews, that it is extremely difficult to conceive of any Jews who could make such a reply as this. And that

We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily

these men were Jews, is placed beyond all reasonable doubt by the fact of their having been baptized unto John's baptism, none but Jews being considered proper subjects for that baptism. The reply, then, of these men to Paul, had respect not to the existence of the Holy Spirit, but to the Spirit's having been given according to ancient prophecy. 2:17. They, doubtless, conveyed to Paul the idea, We have not even heard whether the Holy Spirit has been imparted. The language of their reply is strikingly similar, in the original, to that in the Gospel of John, 7:39 — "For the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*;" in which passage our translators very properly supplied the word *given*, there being in the original passage no word corresponding to it.

3. The reply which these men made, showed Paul that there was something peculiar in their case; for they had separated themselves, as a little community distinct from the other Jews, by being baptized, and yet knew nothing of the fact, then so well known to the disciples of Jesus, that the promised extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit had been imparted. If they had received the doctrine of Jesus from any apostle, or evangelist, they could not fail to have heard of these gifts of the Spirit. There was, then, a remarkable peculiarity in respect to them. This Paul endeavored to ascertain; and therefore asked them, *Unto what, then, were ye baptized?* what baptism have ye received, by which you have avowed your obligations to the Messiah, while you have not heard that the Holy Spirit has been shed forth? It was, indeed, a remarkable case, coming to light so many years after the extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit was commenced. || *And they said, Unto John's baptism;* we received the doc-

baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard *this*, they

trine which John the Baptist taught; namely, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, or, in other words, that the Messiah was about to appear. And by receiving baptism, as he enjoined, we bound ourselves to lead a life of repentance and piety according to his doctrine, holding ourselves ready to welcome the Messiah. We were baptized as John's disciples, in expectation of the speedy coming of the Messiah.

4. *Then said Paul, &c.* The apostle proceeded to unfold to them the nature and design of John's baptism, explaining to them that it involved a profession of repentance and of determination to lead a new life, in preparation for the Messiah's coming, on whom they were to believe, and whom they were to follow as his obedient subjects. Paul made known to them, also, the name of Jesus, as the Messiah who had been expected. As the times of the Messiah were now fully come, and Jesus was clearly proved to be the Messiah, it was incumbent on them to acknowledge him as such, and enrol themselves among his disciples. || *That is, on Christ Jesus.* Paul thus explained who it was that actually came after John the Baptist, and who, consequently, it was that must be acknowledged as the Messiah.

5. *When they heard this, &c.* The preceding verse gives, doubtless, only the chief topics of instruction presented by Paul. These were enlarged upon, and all the information given which the case required. The apostle fully explained the object of John's baptism, as the men needed more accurate instruction than they had received. He would also, of course, present the claims of Jesus to be obeyed as the Messiah. The men saw the evidence, and admitted it; and with readiness of mind adopted the apostle's views. || *They were bap-*

were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his*

tized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Acknowledging the claims of Jesus, and submitting to his authority, they were baptized as his disciples.

6. *When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost, &c.* The laying on of the apostles' hands was the outward act, in connection with which, usually, the extraordinary influences of the Spirit were communicated. See 8:17. || *They spake with tongues; with other languages besides their own. And prophesied.* See on 13:1. 15:32. They were under a spiritual impulse, by which believers obtained clearer views of divine truth, and expressed themselves on religious subjects with unwonted fervor and power. The gift of predicting future events was also sometimes bestowed. Speaking with tongues and prophesying, as just explained, were the usual methods in which the extraordinary influences of the Spirit manifested themselves.

The extreme brevity of Luke's account respecting these twelve men, has occasioned many conjectures in regard to the transaction here recorded. Some writers have contended that these men did not receive baptism after Paul met with them, and that the fifth verse, which certainly seems to affirm that they did, is to be understood, not as the historian's words, but as a continuation of the apostle's remarks to these men, and his relating of what was usually done in the days of John the Baptist. This opinion has been maintained by two opposite classes of writers—the one, those who contend, in the most strict manner, that baptism, whether administered to a professed believer or to an infant, is never, on any occasion, to be repeated, and who suppose that, if these men were rebaptized, this fact would encourage the practice of rebaptizing, and thus detract from the sacredness of baptism; the other class, those who maintain that John's baptism was essentially Chris-

hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

tian baptism, and who suppose that, if these men were rebaptized, it would follow that John's baptism was not Christian baptism. As to the simple inquiry, whether these men were baptized anew, an affirmative answer seems unavoidable, if we follow the most obvious and natural meaning of the passage, as conveyed both in our translation and in the original Greek. But why were they baptized anew? The brevity of the account hinders us from obtaining entire satisfaction; and yet there are intimations in it of sufficient clearness to relieve us from any serious embarrassment. They were not baptized anew simply because they had been at first baptized only "unto John's baptism;" but for reasons which would not, in the least, call in question the authority and sufficiency of the baptism which John was commissioned to administer. It does not appear from the narrative, that they had been baptized by *John himself*. Nor is it likely, that if they had been baptized by John in Palestine, they would be found, nearly thirty years after John's death, so ignorant of the fact that Jesus had appeared as the Messiah whom John announced. It is far more probable that they had been baptized since the time of John, at a distance from Palestine, by some person professing to be a disciple of John. They were probably baptized by this person *after* the death of John, and when, consequently, baptism, as John's baptism, was a mere nullity. Nor had their minds been directed to the great object of evangelic faith, namely, the Lord Jesus; so that, though for so long a time baptism had been administered in the name of Jesus, as the Messiah who had come, they were ignorant of him. In such circumstances as these, it was evidently proper that, as they had now received full instruction and cordially embraced the truth respecting Jesus, they should be bap-

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

tized in his name. The unintelligent and irregular manner in which they had before been treated, could not destroy their duty to be baptized as followers of Jesus.

8. *Disputing.* See 18:4. 17:17. || *Persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God;* convincing and persuading the hearers in the synagogue respecting the gospel. His discourses produced conviction, and led many to embrace the gospel. *The kingdom of God* here means the religion of Christ. His religion was so called, because it was designed to make those who should receive it the people and subjects of God. In the hearts of the Messiah's followers, God reigns.

9. *When divers were hardened;* when some obstinately resisted the truth, as presented by Paul. || *Spake evil of that way;* reviled the religion of Christ. || *He departed from them;* he left the synagogue, where were both those who reviled, and the multitude whom they were endeavoring to affect. || *Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.* The school-room of Tyrannus was doubtless a hall used for public discussions, perhaps of a philosophical nature. Such discussions were, in that age, very frequent. No information respecting Tyrannus has reached us, besides what is contained in this verse. He was probably a Greek teacher of philosophy, and had become favorable to the apostle.

10. *All they which dwelt in Asia, &c.* Asia, here, probably designates

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them

that region of country which was otherwise called Ionia, or Proconsular Asia, and of which Ephesus was the capital. See on 2:9. 16:6. Such was the resort to Ephesus for purposes of traffic, and for paying reverence to the heathen goddess Diana, to whom a splendid temple had been there erected (v. 35), that a knowledge of the gospel was, in consequence of Paul's preaching in Ephesus, spread through all that country, among the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

12. *So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs, &c.* Handkerchiefs and aprons were applied to Paul's person, and then to the persons of the sick by their friends, in cases where they could not convey the sick to him, or could not procure a visit from him. And in this way, a blessing was obtained. Not that there was in Paul's person a healing virtue, which could be communicated to these articles, and could thence act on the sick; but in connection with these outward acts, divine power wrought a cure, thus making Paul most signally an agent of God, acting by his special authority. So in the case of the blind man, related in the ninth chapter of John. His sight was restored in connection with clay spread upon his eyes, and then washed off at the pool of Siloam. The miracles thus wrought were very similar to those which appear, from 5:15, to have followed the shadow of Peter passing over the sick.

to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

13. *Then certain of the vagabond Jews*; that is, Jews who travelled about from place to place, practising their superstitious ceremonies for the cure of diseases, and for expelling demons. They were more respected in society, than the word *vagabond* would now lead us to suppose. They would seem to have been, by profession, travelling physicians and expellers of demons. || *Exorcists*; men who pretended to have such power, by the use of incantations, over evil spirits, as virtually to bind them by an oath, as it were, to leave the bodies of those into whom they had entered. The evil spirits, they would pretend, left the possessed persons through dread of the wrath they would incur by slighting the authority of the name, by which they were charged to come out. Jesus had reference to such persons in Matt. 12: 27. || *We adjure you by Jesus, &c.*; we solemnly charge you, as by the sanction of an oath, in the name of Jesus, and by your dread of his wrath. || *Whom Paul preacheth*. They had seen, and the people had seen, that the curing of diseases and the casting out of demons by Paul in the name of Jesus, were all realities, and vastly different from what themselves could do. They therefore altered their mode of proceeding, in hopes to maintain their reputation, and, instead of the form of words which they had been accustomed to use, adopted one which mentioned the name of Jesus as the being who required the demons to depart from the possessed persons. They supposed, perhaps, that there was some charm in the very word *Jesus* which

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus: and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

the demons could not resist; or, as the name of Jesus was associated with so much power, as used by Paul, they vainly supposed similar effects would follow their own use of it, particularly if, by some addition, they should show that they meant the very Jesus whom Paul preached.

14. *Sceva — chief of the priests*. Sceva either was, or had been, a chief priest; that is, probably, a head of one of the classes into which the priests were divided.

15. *The evil spirit answered*. It was the man who spoke; but his language and actions are ascribed to the evil spirit by which he was influenced. In like manner, we read, in Mark 1: 34. 3: 11, of demons speaking. || *Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but, &c.*; the power of Jesus and of Paul I acknowledge, and cannot withstand. But what right have you to command me? I dread not your power; I despise your claim to have superiority over me.

16. *Naked*; their outside garments torn from them. Generally, in the New Testament, the word *naked* refers to a partial, rather than an entire, destitution of clothing. A person only partly dressed, or with tattered garments, is also among us sometimes called *naked*. The violent conduct of the demoniac here mentioned, shows that he was in a state of insanity. An instance of possession by evil spirits strikingly similar to this, is mentioned in Matt. 8: 28, and Luke 8: 26—30.

17. *The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified*. The signal proofs of divine power deeply impressed the people; and they regarded the name

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

19 Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men ; and they counted

of Jesus with great reverence. It became strikingly evident that true miracles were performed by Paul in the name of Jesus ; never was he defeated in attempting these works, as were these deceiving exorcists.

18. *Many—confessed and showed their deeds* ; the evil deeds, in which they had been engaged before they became believers. They became more deeply impressed with the necessity of an ample confession of their former evil courses of life, and of an honest avowal of a determination to forsake such practices. The defeat of the sons of Sceva, and the evidence of the invincible power of Jesus, quickened the consciences of some who had professed to believe, but who had, perhaps, retained some secret evil practices.

19. *Curious arts* ; magic arts, sorcery ; such practices as those of Simon the sorcerer. See 8: 9. || *Books* ; books which gave instruction in magic. Ephesus was distinguished for the practice of these deceptive arts, which pretended to teach the ways of obtaining the coöperation of superhuman agents, and to qualify men to practise what has been significantly called *the black art*. So noted was Ephesus for such pretended skill in obtaining the intervention of superhuman power, that scrolls of parchment, containing certain words and expressions, and designed to operate as a kind of amulet, or charm, preserving the wearer's person from enemies, both seen and unseen, from accidents, and from defeat in contests, bore the name of *Ephesian letters*. A person without one of these scrolls was thought to be without a defence ; he had nothing about him to charm away evil powers, or to secure for him superhuman aid. || *Burned them*

the price of them, and found it fifty thousand *pieces of silver*.

20 So mighty grew the word of God, and prevailed.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Mace-

before all ; burnt them in public, as showing their renunciation of such diabolical practices, and their determination to give them, henceforward, no countenance. || *Fifty thousand pieces of silver*. The amount reduced to our currency cannot be accurately stated, since we know not whether Jewish money was meant, or Attic, or Roman. If it was the Jewish, the sum would be about twenty-eight thousand dollars, since a shekel (which was generally meant by the word translated *piece of silver*) was worth about fifty-six cents. If the *piece of silver* was the Roman drachma, or denarius, worth about fourteen cents, then the sum would be seven thousand dollars. It is probable the coin referred to was the Roman. It may, however, have been the Attic, and then the *piece of silver* was equal to about fifteen cents and a half ; and the amount proportionably larger. The quantity of books destroyed cannot be estimated by the number, that might now be bought for an equal sum of money, because the price of books was so much higher at that time than now. Printing was not then invented, and books were multiplied only by transcribing. Whether the number of books was large or small, the pecuniary sacrifice was very great, and was a strong proof of the sincerity of those who made it. And the remark was fully justified, which the sacred writer was led to make in view of the transaction—“So mighty grew the word of God and prevailed.”

21. *Paul purposed in the spirit* ; that is, in his mind. He proposed to visit again Macedonia and Achaia, through which provinces he had passed on his former tour (16: 10. 17: 15. 18: 1), and thence to visit Jerusalem. || *I must also see Rome* ;

donia, and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself staid in Asia for a season.

23 And the same time there

the metropolis of the Roman empire. It was highly desirable that Paul should visit the imperial city, as the cause of Christ would be greatly benefited by strengthening the Christian influence there, and opportunities might also be secured for still further spreading the gospel. Thus perpetually was the apostle devising methods for extending his usefulness. His aim was, fully to discharge the commission with which he had been intrusted, and as widely as possible to diffuse the knowledge of the truth. Hence he wished to labor at those points which appeared to promise the largest and the happiest success.

22. *Timotheus and Erastus.* On this third tour, as well as on the two preceding, Paul had taken assistants with him. The name of Timotheus has already repeatedly occurred. See 16:1. 17:14, 15. 18:5. Erastus was, perhaps for the first time, associated with the apostle on the present tour. He is probably the same as is mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:20; a different person from the one mentioned in Rom. 16:23. Besides Timotheus and Erastus, he was accompanied by Gaius and Aristarchus. See v. 29. || *He himself staid in Asia*; in Proconsular Asia. See on the tenth verse. Paul continued his stay for a season in Ephesus, the capital of this region, intending soon to follow Timotheus and Erastus, whom he had sent forward into Macedonia.

23. *About that way*; or, the way, the Christian religion (see on v. 9), so called, as being the way of God, as prescribing the course of life which God requires.

24. *Silver shrines for Diana.* Diana was a heathen goddess, held in

arose no small stir about that way.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that

peculiar honor at Ephesus. She was one of the most highly and most extensively honored of the heathen divinities, being regarded as goddess of hunting, of travelling, of enchantments, of birth, health, &c.; so that, with reference to some one or more of these interests, over which she was thought to preside, she would have an uncommon number of votaries. A most magnificent temple had been erected to her at the entrance of Ephesus. In honor of her, small silver shrines, or temples, were made after the model of the large temple, and furnished with a small image of the goddess. These were sufficiently small to be carried about, and appear to have been in great demand among her devotees, so that Demetrius and other silversmiths in Ephesus carried on a very lucrative traffic in these shrines. The protection of Diana was, of course, supposed by the multitude to be gained by possessing one of them. They would be sought for by persons at a distance, who could not conveniently come to Ephesus to worship; and those who had visited the city would wish, both in hope of protection and for show, to possess one of them; while, doubtless, every person of consequence in and around Ephesus would have one. || *The craftsmen*; the artisans, the men employed in manufacturing the miniature temples.

25. *The workmen of like occupation.* A large number of workmen would find employment about the various parts of this occupation. Other articles, furnishing employment to workmen, besides the miniature shrines, would of course be required by the prevalent idolatry. Demetrius

by this craft we have our wealth :

26 Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands.

assembled together the wealthy artisans who were engaged in this traffic, and the numerous workmen who were dependent on them for employment and subsistence ; thus seeking to excite a wide-spread opposition to Paul and his companions. || *By this craft ;* by this employment.

26. *This Paul hath — turned away much people ;* that is, from the worship of Diana to his own views of religion. || *Saying that they be no gods which are made with hands.* Among the common people in heathen nations, the images which were made for worship were regarded as *the gods themselves* ; so that those who made the images were called *makers of gods* ; and when an image was stolen away, they considered the god himself as gone. The more intelligent saw, of course, the absurdity of such a notion ; they regarded the images as mere representatives of the gods. But even they held that the gods were somehow resident in the images, and that the images were filled with the presence of the deity. Thus the notions of the intelligent, as well as of the multitude, were wholly favorable to the worship of idols. The declaration which Demetrius ascribed to Paul was a true one ; and it shows that the apostle had made himself well understood on this subject in this idolatrous city. So, in Lystra (14: 15), he declared heathen gods to be mere vanities ; and before the Athenian assembly on Mars-hill (17: 24, 29), he affirmed that the true God does not dwell in temples, and is not like gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. Compare Rom. 1: 22, 23.

27. *To be set at nought ;* to be

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought ; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia, and the world worshippeth.

28 And when they heard these

brought into contempt. || *But also that the temple of the great goddess Diana, &c.* Demetrius was plainly actuated by love of gain, and by a fear that Paul's influence would dry up the source of his wealth. But the profession of a fervent zeal for the honor of the goddess, and an appeal to the religious, or superstitious, prejudices of the company he had assembled, must also be made so as to secure their ready coöperation in his attempt against Paul. Thus, under the cloak of religion, and of a most sacred regard for the honor of Diana, he would cover his selfish purposes, and seek the apostle's destruction, or at least his expulsion from the city. The temple of Diana was particularly mentioned by Demetrius, as an object of religious veneration. This was so magnificent a structure, as to be reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. It is said to have been four hundred and twenty-five feet in length, and two hundred and twenty in breadth ; and its roof was supported by a hundred and twenty-seven columns, sixty feet in height. It was not completed till two hundred and twenty years after it was commenced ; and all the cities of Asia contributed to its erection. It was set on fire and partially destroyed by Erostratus, — who wished thus to immortalize his name, — about three hundred and fifty-six years before Christ ; but was afterwards rebuilt in a still more magnificent style, at the common expense of Greece. || *Whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.* An extravagant method of affirming the very great and wide-spread homage which was paid to Diana.

sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

28. *They were full of wrath;* against Paul, and full of mad zeal for the honor of their goddess.

29. *Having caught Gaius and Aristarchus.* Demetrius and his company succeeded in securing the persons of these two men, who were Paul's fellow-travellers, and forcibly conveyed them into the theatre, where a tumultuous crowd was collected together. Their design was, to direct the indignation of the populace against them, and probably to effect their destruction. || *The theatre.* The Greek cities of the Roman empire employed theatres not only for dramatic exhibitions and other shows, but also for holding assemblies of the people, convened for business or other public occasions.

30. *When Paul would have entered in unto the people;* in order to plead the cause of himself and his companions. Knowing that he had committed no offence, he was willing to appear before the multitude in self-vindication, and for the sake of bearing testimony in behalf of the gospel. Compare 14: 14—17. 17: 18, &c. || *The disciples suffered him not.* The believers in Ephesus would not consent to Paul's proposal of going into this tumultuous assembly.

31. *Certain of the chief of Asia;* literally, some of the Asiarchs. The eastern cities of the Roman empire were in the habit of choosing annually certain wealthy men to preside over their religious concerns, and to provide, at these officers' own expense, public games and theatrical entertainments for the people. These

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews

men received their title from the provinces to which they belonged; and, of course, those who were selected for this honor, in Proconsular Asia, were called *Asiarchs*. The chief man of the Asiarchs made Ephesus his residence, and others were associated with him as assessors and assistants. Some of these, being favorable to Paul, advised him not to expose himself to the multitude, who had now become so infuriated. || *That he would not adventure himself into the theatre;* that he would not venture into the theatre. It was certainly the part of prudence to refrain from appearing before a crowd, whose passions had become so excited.

33. *And they drew Alexander out of the multitude.* The idea of the sacred writer is, probably, that some from among the people set forth, or proposed, Alexander as a suitable person to address the assembly. || *The Jews putting him forward;* the Jews endeavoring to get him into a proper place to speak; or, perhaps, recommending him as a proper person to be heard on the present occasion. The Jews were particularly anxious at that time, because the fury of the populace was quite as likely to be directed against them as against Paul's companions. The Jews were known to be stern opposers of the reigning idolatry, and the common people made no distinction, as to the present matter, between Paul's companions and the Jews. They held Paul and his companions to be Jews; and the fact of a per-

putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried

son's being a Jew was enough to excite their ill-will against him. || *And Alexander — would have made his defence;* not a defence in his own behalf personally, for there was no ground of accusation against him in particular. His aim was, to vindicate the Jews, in distinction from Paul and his associates, and to show that the present difficulty was not occasioned by Jews, as such, or by any of the Jewish community in Ephesus; but that it ought to be traced to Paul, from whom the great body of the Jews kept themselves (v. 9), as really as did the worshippers of Diana. Who Alexander was, we have not the means of knowing. He was, evidently, a prominent man among the Jews, and considered suitable to be set forward as their advocate in a time of danger. Very possibly he is the same as is mentioned in 2 Tim. 4: 14, as Alexander the coppersmith, who did Paul much injury.

34. *But when they knew he was a Jew, &c.* There was a prevalent ill-will against the Jews in the cities where they resided; and this would be particularly excited on the present occasion, as the Jews were known to be unfriendly to the worship of idols, and the multitude made no distinction between Paul and the Jews, in regard to the existing commotion. They wished to hear nothing from the hated company. To prevent him from speaking, they zealously and tumultuously renewed their acclamations in honor of Diana.

35. *The town-clerk.* In the cities of Asia Minor, the title of *public clerk*, or *secretary*, was given to the principal municipal magistrate. It was his duty to preside in their senates, to record the laws and have charge of the archives, and to read

out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35 And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a

in public what was to be made known to the people. The secretary of Ephesus was not present, probably, at the beginning, as the assembly was a tumultuous one, more like a mob than a lawful and properly regulated meeting. When he came to the theatre, however, and saw the commotion, he took means at once for quieting it and dispersing the people. He seems to have been a man of much forethought and ability, as well as candor. He suggested to the people, that there was no need of their clamorous protestations in honor of Diana, since it was every where known that the city of Ephesus prided itself on its devotion to that goddess; besides, the very men against whom the tumult had been excited, had not reviled her. If, however, he declared, Demetrius and his associates had any charge to lay against these men, there was a legal provision, according to which the case could be acted on without a public tumult. || *What man is there that knoweth not, &c.* Is it not universally known already? Is there any just occasion for this tumultuous demonstration of devotion to Diana?

|| *That the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana?* In other words, that the city of the Ephesians has eminently devoted itself to the goddess Diana? Not only was she specially worshipped in Ephesus, but the city had been specially presented, or consecrated, to her; so that the city might well be called the protector, the guardian, of Diana's temple and worship, in grateful acknowledgment of having her for the protector, or guardian, of the city. It was customary for cities to select some particular divinity as their special protector, and to regard themselves, in turn, as spe-

worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

cially bound to honor that divinity. || *And of the image which fell down from Jupiter.* That is, the image of Diana, which was kept in her temple at Ephesus, and which was said by the priests, and believed by the common people, to have been sent down out of heaven from the god Jupiter. It was an artifice of the heathen priests, when an idolatrous image was old, and all knowledge of its maker was lost, to speak of it as having fallen down from heaven; thus securing the greater reverence for it as an object of worship.

37. *Ye have brought hither these men*; Gaius and Aristarchus. See v. 29. || *Robbers of churches*; more properly, temple-robbers. The word *church* is not applicable to a heathen temple. However little reverence Paul and any of his companions had for heathen temples, they could not be accused of robbing the temples, or committing sacrilege against them. They let the temples alone. || *Nor yet blasphemers of your goddess*; revilers of Diana. They had, indeed, no respect for Diana; but their duty did not require them to deal in invectives and calumny, and to use scurrilous language against this pretended divinity. By preaching the gospel in its simplicity and purity, and vindicating the claims of Jesus on men's faith and obedience, they were pursuing the surest way to effect the downfall of every idol, while no charge of positive ill-speaking against any particular heathen deity might be brought against them. Paul and the other primitive preachers never failed, however, on all proper occasions, to bear

38 Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger to be

an honest and decided, yet peaceable, testimony against idolatry. Compare 14: 15. 17: 24, 29.

38. *If Demetrius — have a matter against any man*; or, a ground of complaint against any one. || *The law is open*; rather, according to the original, *There are court days*, days for trying causes; you can have recourse to the law, and obtain redress of grievances. || *And there are deputies*; that is, *proconsuls*; the title of the chief Roman officer in the provinces. Compare 13: 7. The idea is,—There are set days for trials by the proper authorities; and besides, it is the business of proconsuls to see justice done and order observed. Recourse may be had, if necessary, to the proconsul; so that there is no need of a tumultuous concourse like the present. || *Let them implead one another*; let them go to law with each other.

39. *Concerning other matters*; matters which cannot properly be made subjects of a lawsuit, or of settlement by the proconsul. || *It shall be determined in a lawful assembly*; literally, in the lawful assembly. In these eastern cities of the empire, the city authorities had the right of calling assemblies of the citizens at set times, to deliberate on various matters of public interest. The language of the secretary here contained a strong implication that the present assembly was an unlawful one.

40. *For we are in danger to be called in question, &c.*; we are in danger of being accused before the Roman proconsul. Nor would the consequences be light which might follow such an accusation; for by

called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

CHAPTER XX.

1 Paul goeth to Macedonia. 7 He celebrateth the Lord's supper, and preacheth. 9 Eutychus, having fallen down dead, 10 is raised to life. 17 At Miletus he calleth the elders together, telleth them what shall befall to himself, 28 committeth God's flock to them, 29 warneth them of false teachers, 32 commendeth them to God, 35 prayeth with them, and goeth his way.

Roman law, the raising of a riot was an offence punishable with death. || *There being no cause, &c.* The Roman law justified a sudden and tumultuous concourse of people on occasions of fire, of inundations, of invasions by enemies, and of similar public hazards. But for the tumult at Ephesus, no adequate cause could be assigned.

CHAPTER XX.

1. *After the uproar was ceased*; the tumult, excited by Demetrius in Ephesus. || *Paul called — the disciples, and embraced them*; bade them adieu. || *Departed for to go into Macedonia*; as he had purposed to do. See 19: 21. During this third tour, Paul had passed through Phrygia and Galatia (18: 23), and had come to Ephesus. 19: 1. While in Ephesus, he formed the design of visiting a second time Macedonia and Achaia (through which he had passed on his preceding tour — 16: 9, &c. 17: 15, &c.), and then of going to Jerusalem.

2. *And when he had gone over those parts*; the cities and districts in Macedonia. || *He came into Greece*; the country south of Macedonia. It is the same as is elsewhere called *Achaia*. 18: 12, 27. 19: 21.

3. *He purposed to return through Macedonia*. Paul's original design was to sail from some port in Greece for Syria, on his way to Jerusalem.

AND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

3 And *there abode three months*. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus

But the Jews, either discovering or suspecting this design, had taken measures secretly to seize him, for the purpose, doubtless, of putting him to death. In consequence of this plot, he altered his plan, and concluded to return, in part at least, by the way he had come, namely, through Macedonia; thus thwarting his unfriendly countrymen.

4. *And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater, &c.* It appears from the fifth verse that the men here named prosecuted their journey as far as to Troas in Asia before Paul proceeded, leaving him, by his own arrangement, doubtless, at Philippi, as it would seem from the sixth verse. They did not, then, strictly speaking, accompany him into Asia; but, as the original states, *as far as to Asia*. He and they were in company till they came to Philippi, the last city in Europe which he was designing at that time to visit, and from which he would follow them into Asia. Thus these men accompanied him, as we may say, using a general form of speech, *as far as to Asia*. || *Berea*; a city of Macedonia. See 17: 10. || *Aristarchus*. See 19: 29. || *Gaius of Derbe*. In 19: 29, Gaius is spoken of as a Macedonian. If the one here mentioned were the same man, he was probably a native either of Macedonia, or of Derbe in Asia Minor, and a resident of one or the other of these

and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5 These going before, tarried for us at Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul

preached unto them, (ready to depart on the morrow) and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

commencing with the new moon of April. It is mentioned here merely as a note of time, just as we sometimes employ the word *Christmas*, when we mean to designate the twenty-fifth of December.

7. *Upon the first day of the week*, &c.; the Christian sabbath, kept as a sacred day, and the day for Christian worship, in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. || *To break bread*; to celebrate the Lord's supper. This was a part of the religious services; for there was also preaching on the occasion. It is a fair inference from this verse, that the first day of the week was employed by Paul and the Christians in Troas, as a time of worship. It came to be denominated "the Lord's day" (Rev. 1: 10), and took the place, among the followers of Christ, of the seventh day as a sabbath among the Jews.

8. *The upper chamber*; the guest chamber, where company was received. Compare 1: 13. Mark 14: 14, 15. A description given by Mr. Jowett, in his Christian Researches, of a house in a modern Greek city, will give us, probably, a correct idea of the room where this worshipping assembly was held. The chief room he represents as being in the upper or third story, secluded, spacious, and commodious; higher and larger than those below, having two projecting windows, and the floor so much extended in front beyond the lower part of the building, that the projecting windows considerably overhung the street.

9. *The third loft*; or, story.

places; so that he might be called Gaius of Macedonia, or of Derbe. || *Timotheus*. See 16: 1. || *And of Asia*; Asia in the most limited sense. See 16: 6. || *Tychicus*; mentioned also in Eph. 6: 21. Col. 4: 7. || *Trophimus*; mentioned again in 21: 29. 2 Tim. 4: 20.

5. *These—tarried for us at Troas*. See on 16: 8. The use of the pronoun *us* in this verse shows that Luke, the writer of the Acts, had again joined the apostle. See on 16: 10, 40. Probably Luke had remained in Philippi until the present time, perhaps in the practice of his profession as a physician, and for the benefit of the Christian cause in that place. Paul, having come to Philippi, would naturally wish to spend at least a short time there, for strengthening the church which, in company with Silas, he had there planted. 16: 12, 40. He accordingly sent forward his companions, directing them to wait for him in Troas. As Luke had now the opportunity of renewing his connection with Paul, he seems, from the following verse, to have availed himself of this opportunity.

6. *After the days of unleavened bread*; that is, the festival of the passover, during which the Jews were not allowed to use leavened bread. It was observed in commemoration of the Hebrews' departure from Egypt, and of their being protected when the first-born of Egypt were slain. See on 12: 3. This occurred at a set time annually,

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves ; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul : for so had

10. *Embracing him.* Compare, in 1 Kings 17 : 21, the account of the prophet Elijah's restoring to life the son of the widow of Zarephath, and in 2 Kings 4 : 34, 35, of Elisha's restoring the son of the Shunamite. || *His life is in him* ; is returned to him. For the young man is said to have been taken up dead.

11. *When he—had broken bread, and eaten.* This refers, probably, not to the Lord's supper, but to Paul's taking a meal in preparation for his expected departure. It is mentioned with particular reference to Paul, not to the worshipping company. The Lord's supper had, probably, been observed at an earlier period of the meeting. || *And talked a long while* ; conversed with the persons present. Allusion is not had here to preaching, but to familiar conversation ; a different word being employed to designate preaching, as in the ninth verse.

12. *They brought the young man alive* ; they brought, or conducted, the young man to his home.

13. *We went before to ship* ; we, Paul's companions in Troas, went before him and took ship ; he having concluded, as is soon stated, to leave Troas by land. || *And sailed unto Assos* ; a maritime city of Mysia, a few miles south of Troas. || *Minding himself to go afoot.* Perhaps, by going on foot, he might have opportunity to visit some of the Christians between Troas and Assos. Besides, the pas-

he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios ; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogylgium ; and the next *day* we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia : for he hasted, if it were possible for him,

sage by water was comparatively a tedious one, being two thirds longer than by land.

14. *Came to Mitylene* ; a celebrated city, the capital of the island of Lesbos.

15. *Over against Chios* ; an island in the Egean sea, south from Lesbos, and now called *Scio*. || *Samos* ; a celebrated island, south-east from Chios, and near the coast of the province of Lydia. || *And tarried at Trogylgium* ; a town on the coast of Asia Minor, opposite to Samos. A reader of our version would naturally suppose that Trogylgium was a town on the island of Samos. A slight change in the punctuation, and in the words, would more correctly express the original, and prevent an erroneous impression ; thus — “ We arrived at Samos ; and having tarried at Trogylgium, the next day we came to Miletus.” *Miletus* was a maritime city of the province of Caria, south from Ephesus. It was more anciently the capital of Ionia, or Proconsular Asia, and was renowned for its temple to the heathen god Apollo. A few ruins are believed now to mark the site of the ancient city.

16. *For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus* ; he had determined to sail past it, not to touch at Ephesus during his present voyage to Syria. || *He would not spend the time in Asia.* It did not suit his plan to spend any more time in the region through which he was now passing. Had he

to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the Lord with all

humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 *And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,*

21 *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance*

made another visit to Ephesus, so much time would be demanded for it, that he would fail of reaching Jerusalem in time for the approaching festival. || *The day of Pentecost*; one of the annual festivals of the Jews, when great multitudes of them repaired from all quarters to Jerusalem. A favorable opportunity was consequently presented for promoting the cause of Christ, and having interviews with converted Jews. See 2: 1. Jews who had become Christians, as well as other Jews, still went up to the annual convocations. Paul may have felt it important to be at Jerusalem during the Pentecost, so as to refute the calumnies with which some were loading him, pretending that he had become an adversary of Moses. 21: 21. It appears, too, from 24: 17, that he was the bearer of a pecuniary contribution, which had been made for the Christians in Jerusalem, or Judea; and on this account he would wish to reach the city as soon as possible. Nor did he have much time at his command; for the Pentecost occurred fifty days after the passover, and this latter festival had already taken place, while Paul was at Philippi. See v. 6.

17. *He sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church*; those who had the oversight of the church, as ministers and teachers. The number of Christians in Ephesus was large; and they needed several such officers, though they were not formally separated into distinct churches. Perhaps, too, as might appear from the expressions used in the 25th verse, and as Ephesus was the metropolis of

the region, ministers from other parts of the region came with those of the city. Paul, not expecting to have another opportunity to counsel and caution them, and not being able, through lack of time, to visit them, invited them to meet him at Miletus, there to receive his farewell address. This address is marked by a most affectionate solicitude for the prosperity of the churches, and for the spiritual welfare of all with whom he had had intercourse. It faithfully warned the ministers of their responsibilities and dangers, and excited them to watchfulness and faithfulness. The apostle's honest statement of his own feelings and conduct as a minister of the Lord Jesus, could not but affect his hearers with a sense of their duty, and call forth generous resolutions faithfully to perform the work which had been intrusted to them.

18. *I came into Asia*; Asia, in the narrowest sense of the word.

19. *Temptations*; trials, adversities. || *By the lying in wait of the Jews*; by the plots and evil counsels of the Jews. Compare v. 3. 13: 45, 50. 17: 5, 13.

20. *And from house to house*; privately. The apostle here refers to the private opportunities which he had had of inculcating the gospel, in distinction from his addressing public assemblies, like those which are referred to in 19: 9. These private opportunities would include the occasions of being with individuals and families separately, and of addressing small companies of Christians in dwelling-houses.

toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things

22. *I go bound in the spirit, &c.*; or, in spirit, in my mind. Paul felt himself irresistibly impelled to go to Jerusalem. Such was his conviction of duty, that he felt *bound*, or constrained, to go; so that, if he declined, he would be disobedient to the Spirit and the providence of God.

23. *The Holy Ghost witnesseth, &c.*; makes known to me. Paul knew not exactly what would happen to him in Jerusalem; but he had a constant divine warning, as he passed from city to city, to hold himself ready for imprisonment and other afflictions for the sake of Christ. The warning which the apostle received came, in some instances at least, from men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit; and what they foretold to him might, of course, be spoken of as the testimony of the Spirit. See 21:4. Such testimony was given *repeatedly* in regard to the visit he was now proposing to make at Jerusalem; and it might well be said that in every city he was reminded of his liability to persecution. See 21:4, 11. Suffering for the cause of Christ never took him at unawares. He was a servant of a persecuted Master, and was divinely taught that persecution would be his portion. For an affecting illustration of this thought, read 2 Cor. 4:8-11. *Bonds*; chains and imprisonment. *Abide me*; are waiting for me. An expressive manner of showing his constant exposure to persecution, and his readiness to meet it.

24. *But none of these things move me*; or, shake my determination. A literal translation of this clause in the original, is, *I make account of nothing*.

move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Paul cared not what was to betide him in the discharge of his apostolical duty. || *That I might finish my course*; complete the course of my life, or of my ministry. Life, or the employment in which life is spent, is here compared to a race which a person is running. So John the Baptist is spoken of, in 13:25, as fulfilling his course; and the apostle himself, near the close of his life, triumphantly declared (2 Tim. 4:7), "I have finished my course."

25. *The kingdom of God*; the gospel. See on 19:8. || *Shall see my face no more*. Paul was now on his way to Jerusalem (v. 22), and was intending afterwards to go to Rome. 19:21. Knowing that, wherever he went, trials and persecutions awaited him, he felt a strong conviction that he should never again see those whom he was now addressing. Whether he ever was again in the region of Ephesus, as a matter of fact, after his two years' detention at Rome, which followed his going to Jerusalem, we have no means of determining, as Luke's account in this book terminates with the apostle's detention at Rome, and other accounts respecting his subsequent life are but little to be depended on. It seems to be the general opinion among writers of credit, that, in all probability, Paul was again in Proconsular Asia. Still, amid the changes which death and other events, for a number of years, would make, he may never again have seen those whom he was now addressing. And even if he ever did see some of them again, his language in this place would be strictly proper; because

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*,

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

the word here translated *I know* bears, in ancient writers, the broader signification which is expressed by our phrase, *I have a confident expectation, or belief*; as if the apostle had said, It is altogether my expectation, I feel a strong conviction, that I shall never again see you.

26. *Wherefore I take you to record*; I call on you to bear witness; or, I solemnly protest unto you. || *I am pure from the blood of all men*; those who perish in their sins cannot charge their unhappy doom on me. I have delivered my soul from the guilt of not warning them. Compare Ezek. 33: 4—6.

28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves*; as to your conduct and the doctrine you preach. || *And to all the flock*; the church, the company of believers. Compare Luke 12:

32. 1 Pet. 5: 2. || *Overseers*; those who have the oversight, as pastors, to feed and tend the Christian flock, as Christ's under-shepherds. The word here rendered *overseers* is the same as is rendered, in Phil. 1: 1. 1 Tim. 3: 1, and elsewhere, *bishops*. It designates the same men as, in the 17th verse, are called *elders*. The use of the word *bishop*, as signifying *a superior order of clergy*, is not found in the New Testament. Elders, pastors, and bishops, were originally terms of office, applicable to the same individuals at one and the same time. This office the apostle here recognizes as a sacred one, to which these persons were called by the Holy Spirit. How impressive a view of the Christian ministry it is, that the Holy Spirit calls true ministers to their work, and employs them as his agents in turning men to righteousness and preparing them for heaven! || *To feed the church of God*; to promote the piety and the happiness of the church, by exhibit-

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

ing Christian truth, and with earnest solicitude to watch over its interests, and guard it from danger, as a shepherd feeds and tends his flock.—The Greek manuscript copies of the Acts differ in regard to the expression, *church of God*; some having the reading, *church of God*; others, *church of the Lord*; others, *church of the Lord and [or, even] God*; and some presenting still other forms of expression. Biblical critics are much divided in judgment respecting the genuine reading; and certainty is not likely to be attained. Some able critics consider the reading, *church of the Lord*, as by far better supported than the common reading; while other able critics do not perceive sufficient reason to abandon the common reading. The apostle may have had in his mind the two-fold idea, that the church is the church of God (1 Tim. 3: 15. 1 Pet. 5: 2), which the Lord Jesus purchased with his own blood (John 10: 15, 17); and, without distinctly naming the Lord Jesus, he may have tacitly alluded to him. This combination of thought would be easy to the apostle, because, in his judgment, Christ was God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3: 16); and the Saviour himself had said, “I am in the Father, and the Father in me.” John 14: 10. Such a tacit allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ, without mentioning his name, occurs, also, in 1 John 3: 16 — Hereby perceive we love [English version — “the love of God;” the words of God being supplied by the translators]; because he laid down his life for us.

It may not be amiss to remark here, that there are, occasionally, different readings, as to some words and clauses, in different Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. By a comparison of them with one another, and

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves

a consideration of various circumstances, a judgment can generally be formed as to the word, or clause, which the sacred writer actually employed. It is very remarkable that so few difficulties of this kind, comparatively, exist in manuscripts of the New Testament. Divine providence seems to have watched with peculiar care over the sacred text; for though, in some passages, it is difficult to decide which one, of several expressions, proceeded from the inspired writer, manuscripts of other books are encumbered with immensely greater difficulties. The copies of the Holy Scriptures are incalculably more free from various readings than those of other books. || *He hath purchased with his own blood.* The Lord Jesus has, by the shedding of his blood, that is, by his death, delivered his followers from the consequences and the power of sin. Hence he is said to have redeemed, or purchased, them. And the price of their redemption, or the ransom which he paid, was his own blood. Compare Rom. 3 : 25. 1 Cor. 6 : 20. Gal. 1 : 4. 3 : 13. Eph. 1 : 7. 1 Pet. 1 : 18, 19. 2 : 24. How strong a motive should this be to his ministers for assiduity and faithfulness, in devoting themselves to the church's interests,—that he himself submitted to crucifixion, being treated as if accursed (Gal. 3 : 13), in order to redeem it! If Christ has done and suffered so much in its behalf, can his ministers, themselves his redeemed ones, be insensible to his demand for their unceasing anxieties and labors for its welfare?

29. *For I know, &c.* There was a distressing cause for enjoining on these ministers an intense solicitude for the church; namely, the attempts which would be made by false teachers to lead the followers of Christ astray from the truth. || *After my departing;* after my leaving this re-

shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three

gion. || *Grievous wolves;* false teachers, destructive to the church, as ravenous wolves to a flock of sheep. So our Lord, in Matt. 7 : 15, cautions against false teachers who come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. || *Enter in among you;* come to you from other quarters. || *Not sparing the flock;* not treating the flock with tenderness, but most deeply injuring it. The apostle referred to pretended teachers, who would deny some of the first principles of the gospel, and divide the company of the believers into factions. Their aims would be selfish, not benevolent. If they could only spread their own false views, and promote their personal, or party, interests, they would not care what should become of the flock.

30. *Also of your own selves shall men arise, &c.* Not only from abroad, will danger come to you; it will also arise from among yourselves. The apostle referred not so much to the preachers whom he was then addressing, as to the company of professed Christians in Ephesus and the surrounding region, as distinguished from remote churches, from which false teachers would introduce themselves among them. He discerned the elements of false doctrine and of strife. Judaizing teachers, who would endeavor to establish Jewish notions, corrupting the simplicity of the gospel, and derogating from the glory of Christ, would arise among them, and seek to disseminate their destructive principles.

31. *By the space of three years, I ceased not, &c.* The apostle did not mean to state exactly the length of time which had elapsed since he first came into Proconsular Asia. It was about three years. Two of these, he taught publicly in the school of Tyrannus (19 : 10); three months preceding, he had taught in the Jew-

years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

ish synagogue (19:8); and previously he had been in Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla. 18:19. It was usual among the Jews to reckon a part of a day for a whole one; and so a part of a year might, in a general statement, be reckoned for a whole one; as if the apostle had said—about the space of three years. || *To warn every one night and day with tears.* How deep and tender was the apostle's solicitude for the welfare of the church!

32. *I commend you to God and the word of his grace;* or, to the doctrine or religious principles which the kindness of God has established, and which are suited to guide in all spiritual affairs. To the care of God and to the gospel, as a system of guiding principles, Paul commanded these Ephesian ministers. || *Which is able to build you up;* to increase and establish your piety. This figurative allusion to the erection of an edifice, in the words *to build you up*, is strikingly expressive of the advancement in divine knowledge and piety which ought to take place in all Christians. The process of building is carried forward every day; part by part, course by course, the structure rises; all needed appendages are attached; and after long-continued labor, the work is finished. So growth in holiness should be steadily and perpetually advancing, till we come (to use another apostolic mode of speech) to a perfect man, to full maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Eph. 4:13. — The clause, “*which is able to build you up,*” may refer either to God, who is the efficient agent in

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

promoting the holiness and happiness of his people, or to *the word of grace*, the gospel, which is the instrument he employs in accomplishing his designs. It more properly refers, however, to God, because it is *He* only who can give men an inheritance in heaven; a gift, which is here equally spoken of with advancement in piety.

33. *I have coveted no man's silver, &c.* Paul was conscious of having been actuated by no personal or worldly considerations. It was not love of money, or of display, which had been his ruling principle; but a simple and sincere desire to serve the Lord Jesus, and the cause for which the Saviour shed his blood. With the apostle's solemn abjuration of unworthy motives, compare the appeal which the prophet Samuel made to the Hebrews in respect to his freedom from a selfish pursuit of gain. 1 Sam. 12:3. || *Or apparel.* Large quantities of clothing were kept, in eastern countries, by the wealthy, as a part of their riches. Apparel, then, would be mentioned as an article of wealth, like silver and gold.

34. *These hands have ministered unto my necessities.* Compare 18:3. 1 Cor. 9:12, 15. How affecting the sight of the apostle, holding up his hands and protesting that though he had been most honestly and heartily devoted to men's spiritual interests, those hands had, notwithstanding, laboriously procured the means of subsistence for himself and his associates in preaching the gospel!

35. *Ye ought to support the weak;* ye ought to help the afflicted and destitute. || *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Every really benev-

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

olent heart feels the truth of this declaration. The religion of the gospel melts away the selfishness of man, expands his soul, and makes him love his neighbor as himself. To make others really happy, is unspeakably more gratifying than to receive tokens of affection, or to be accumulating for ourselves the most valued bounties of divine providence. The saying here produced by the apostle as our Lord's, is one of which no record remains in the Gospels. There were, doubtless, current among the early disciples many of his sayings which were never committed to writing. In view of such unrecorded sayings, as well as deeds, of our Lord, we can see the propriety of the evangelist John's remark (John 21: 25) — "There are many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

37. *They all — fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.* Such was the oriental manner of expressing intense affection.

CHAPTER XXI.

1. *After we — had launched;* had set sail. || *Coos;* a small island in the Egean sea, near the coast of Caria. It was anciently celebrated for its wine, silks, and cotton. || *Rhodes;* another island, not far, in a south-eastern direction, from Coos, and about twenty miles distant from the coast of Caria. It was greatly celebrated, in ancient times, for the

1 Paul will not by any means be dissuaded from going to Jerusalem. 9 Philip's daughters prophetesses. 17 Paul cometh to Jerusalem: 27 where he is apprehended, and in great danger, 31 but by the chief captain is rescued, and permitted to speak to the people.

AND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with

commercial enterprise and prosperity of its inhabitants. The Rhodians were among the most powerful people by sea. So respected were they, that their maritime regulations became a model for other commercial states, and were introduced into the Roman laws. The most distinguished city of the island was also named Rhodes. This city is illustrious, in ancient history, for its Colossus, or immense brazen image of Apollo, which was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. The image was erected at the entrance of the harbor, the feet being placed on the sides of the entrance. Ships sailing up to the city, passed between the legs of the Colossus. This immense image was a hundred and five feet high, and all its parts were in equal proportion, so that few persons could clasp around its thumb. It was begun three hundred years before Christ, and the artist was occupied on it twelve years. It retained its original position and perfect form fifty-six years, when, in the year 244 before Christ, it was partly demolished by an earthquake. It thus remained, in an inclined posture, for nearly nine hundred years. In the year 672 of the Christian era, it was sold by the Saracens, who had become masters of the island, to a wealthy Jew, who is said to have loaded nine hundred camels with the brass. The value of the brass has been estimated at 36,000 pounds, English money. || *Patara;* a maritime city on the coast of the province Lycia.

a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara :

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre : for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed, and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives

and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four

2. *Phenicia*; the north-west part of Palestine.

3. *Cyprus*. See on 13:4. || *We left it on the left hand*. As will appear by examining the map, they sailed along the southern coast of Cyprus. || *And sailed into Syria*. *Syria* was the general name of the whole country of which Phenicia was a part. Paul was now on his way to Jerusalem; and by entering a Syrian port, he could easily find means of proceeding to that city. || *And landed at Tyre*; the chief city of Phenicia. See on 12:20.

4. *Disciples — who said to Paul through the Spirit, &c.* It was divinely revealed to some of these disciples, that Paul would be severely treated by the Jews in Jerusalem; and hence they drew the inference, that it would be better for him not to go up to that city. They were not divinely instructed to dissuade Paul from going thither; but from the revelation of the Spirit to them, they gave him what appeared to themselves prudent advice.

5. *They all brought us on our way, &c.* To show respect and affection, persons of eminence were, in the East, when travelling, accompanied a short distance as by a kind of escort. Compare 20:38. 15:3.

6. *We took ship*; from Tyre to Ptolemais, on the way to Jerusalem.

7. *Ptolemais*; a city on the coast of Palestine, south of Tyre, and near mount Carmel. It was anciently called *Accho*. Judges 1:31. It received the name of Ptolemais, in honor of Ptolemy the First, king of Egypt, who also acquired dominion in Palestine. He enlarged and adorned it. In the time of the crusades, it received the name of *Acre*, or *St. Jean d'Acre*, on account of a splendid church which had been built there, and dedicated to St. John. In modern days, it underwent a memorable siege by Napoleon Bonaparte.

8. *We — came unto Cesarea*; a city still farther on the coast of Palestine. See on 8:40. || *Philip, the evangelist*; or, preacher of the gospel. An evangelist was a preacher, who labored in various places, as Providence directed, but without the special charge of a church, like a pastor. Compare 8:5, 26, 40. || *Which was one of the seven*; one of the seven men, chosen for the distribution of alms among the destitute of the church in Jerusalem. See 6:3, 5.

9. *Four daughters — which did prophesy*. They were favored with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, fitting them to instruct in religion,

daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

and, perhaps, to predict some future events.

10. *A certain prophet named Agabus.* See on 11: 27, 28.

11. *He took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet.* Such significant acts were often connected with predictions of future events. Compare 1 Kings 22: 11. Jer. 13: 1, &c. 27: 2. 28: 10, 11. Ezek. 4: 1—13. || *So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind, &c.* Both this chapter and the following ones relate the manner in which the apostle, being first apprehended by the Jews, came at length into the power of the Romans, that is, the Gentiles mentioned in this verse. See 25: 11, 12. The Jews were bent on his destruction, at all hazards, and resorted to base and treacherous means to accomplish it.

12. *Both we, and they of that place;* Paul's associates, and the brethren of Cesarea.

13. *What mean ye, to weep and break my heart?* what are ye doing, thus weeping and crushing my resolution, destroying my fortitude? Such was the natural tendency of the conduct of Paul's friends on this occasion. He felt it his duty to go up to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the perils which he must encounter. He needed all the strength he could gain, to meet the conflict; but the sight of weeping friends, and the affectionate expostulations of those who sought to deter him from his purpose, were directly fitted to unman him, and to shake his confidence in the Saviour. With characteristic

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

firmness, and a truly Christian spirit, however, he rose above all these unfavorable circumstances, and gently rebuked the fond solicitude of his friends. || *For I am ready not to be bound only, &c.* Paul had had abundant warning of the dangers he must encounter, as a Christian and an apostle; he had always expected them, and had made up his mind to meet them without flinching. Compare 9: 16. 20: 22, 23. He was not to be turned away from the path of duty, however hazardous it might be. He would very gladly spend and be spent for the cause of Christ. 2 Cor. 12: 15.

14. *He would not be persuaded.* Paul adhered firmly to his purpose; not through obstinacy, but from a settled conviction that duty required him to go up to Jerusalem. He knew all the circumstances which had a bearing on the case. He had an intelligent conviction that duty required him not to shrink from his purpose, and saw that, if he should decline going to Jerusalem, he would be guilty of a dereliction of principle which would make him ever after an unhappy man, and impair his usefulness. It appears, from 24: 17, that he was the bearer of contributions from abroad for the indigent Christians in Jerusalem. Fidelity to his trust was probably one of the reasons which thus nerved his resolution. He regarded it unsuitable for him to be unable to give a fair account of the disposal he had made of the money. Nor would it, probably, in

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

all the circumstances of the case, have been proper to transfer his trust to other hands. In all probability, also, he felt impelled to make this visit on account of the injurious reports which were in circulation, respecting his sentiments on the Jewish law. For as soon as he arrived in Jerusalem, a special interview was held with the apostle James and the elders, during which this subject was introduced as a matter for consultation. See the 20th verse. || *We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.* Thus did Paul's friends express their resignation to the appointments of divine providence. Painful events were foreseen; but the trials appeared to Paul so evidently to lie in his path of duty, that it would be wrong in him to avoid them by failing to go forward in that path.

15. *We took up our carriages.* The word *carriages* in the Bible has a different meaning from what it now bears. Instead of meaning *conveyances*, in which a person is carried from place to place, it rather means *things which are to be carried*, and agrees well with our word *baggage* or *bundles*. Paul and his company made all necessary preparations for proceeding on their journey, and then went up to Jerusalem. The word *carriage* is used with the same meaning in 1 Sam. 17: 22.

16. *Brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, &c.* The peculiar construction of this verse, in the original, has occasioned diversity in translating. The most approved view, however, is, not that this travelling

18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James: and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how

company brought Mnason along with them, but that the disciples from Cesarea conducted Paul and his company to the house of Mnason in Jerusalem. The words might be translated in the following manner: 'There went with us, also, certain of the disciples of Cesarea, conducting us to him with whom we should lodge, namely, one Mnason, of Cyprus.' This man was, probably, a native of Cyprus, who had for some time resided in Jerusalem. He is called *an old disciple*; having, perhaps, received the gospel in some of its earliest years; some suppose, during the life of Jesus.

17. *The brethren received us gladly;* the Christians in Jerusalem welcomed us. Reference is had not to a public meeting, but to the welcome reception which was given by individual brethren.

18. *Paul went in with us unto James;* that is, James the less, the son of Alpheus. Compare 12: 2, 15: 13. Jerusalem appears to have been the stated residence of this apostle. The other apostles were absent from the city. || *All the elders were present.* See on 15: 4. It would seem that a special interview had been appointed for Paul with James and the officers of the church in Jerusalem. This was highly desirable on account of the injurious reports which had gained circulation, respecting Paul's sentiments on the law of Moses. Consultation with distinguished fellow-laborers in Jerusalem would be seasonable.

20. *They glorified the Lord; gave praise to the Lord.* || *How many*

many thousands of Jews there are which believe ; and they are all zealous of the law :

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gen-

thousands of Jews, &c.; literally, How many myriads, or tens of thousands ; an indefinite expression, showing that vast numbers of Jews had professed to embrace the Christian faith. This remark, too, had reference to Jews in Palestine ; since the Jews living abroad are mentioned in the next verse as different persons. || *They are all zealous of the law ;* zealously attached to the Mosaic law, and jealous of any sentiments which may apparently detract from its dignity, or its claims, on men's observance. Multitudes of Jews, who had become acknowledged believers in Jesus, could not divest themselves of their long-cherished prejudices in favor of the ceremonial law of Moses. They contended that it ought to be observed in connection with the gospel, or with faith in Christ. See 15: 1, 5. This attachment to the Mosaic law existed, doubtless, in various degrees, among different men ; but at length it operated very unfavorably to the Christian cause, in giving such a tinge of Judaism to the religious sentiments of many professed Christians, as necessarily conflicted with the pure doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone. Hence arose the Judaizing Christians, whose influence Paul regarded as so disastrous. Compare Gal. 1: 6—9. 5: 1—4.

21. *They are informed — that thou teachest all the Jews, &c.* The report which had reached the Jewish believers in Judea respecting Paul, was an exaggerated one. Though he could not insist on obedience to the law of Moses, as a necessary part of Christian duty, yet he had not directly and positively taught that the Mosaic ceremonies must be abandoned, and that the Jews ought not to circumcise their children, or to perform various other things which the Mo-

ties to forsake Moses, saying, That they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore ? the multitude must needs come to-

said law had enjoined previously to the coming of Christ. On the contrary, he himself practised some of these ceremonies for the sake of conciliating the Jews, when the case was such as would not put to hazard the essential principles of the gospel. See 16: 3. 1 Cor. 9: 20. He regarded these ceremonies as matters of indifference, and would leave his Christian brethren among the Jews to the gradual influence of increasing evangelical light, as furnishing a remedy for their ill-judged attachment to the law. Still, he would maintain the utter inefficacy of such observances for the salvation of men ; and he taught an entire renunciation of all outward observances, as a meritorious ground of justification before God. He contended for faith in Christ as the only ground of justification ; while yet, if any persons felt a desire to continue certain Jewish forms, he would allow them to do so, provided no reliance for justification was placed on such obedience to the law. The exaggerated report which had been received in Jerusalem originated, probably, with unconverted Jews abroad, who had occasioned Paul so much trouble, and appeared so unalterably hostile to him. The communication between Jews abroad and those who lived in Palestine was intimate and frequent, in consequence of the prevalent custom of observing the festivals in Jerusalem. The ill-will of many Jews, who continued to reject the Lord Jesus, might prompt them to seek to undermine the favorable opinion which converted Jews might have cherished for Paul. || *Neither to walk after the customs :* nor to observe the religious practices customary among the Jews.

22. *What is it therefore ?* what is it best, therefore, to do ? || *For the multitude must needs come together.*

gether; for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: we have four men which have a vow on them;

As soon as the Christian Jews in general, in Jerusalem, should know that Paul was in the city, there would be an anxious desire to see him, and to ascertain whether the reports were well founded. Allusion may here be had not so much to the coming together of the Christians at the call of the elders, or to any stated public meeting, as to their going in groups, for more familiar interviews, to the house where Paul had his lodgings.

23. *Do therefore this, that we say to thee.* This is to be understood, not as the language of command, but of advice to the apostle. || *We have four men which have a vow on them.* It was customary among the Jews, for individuals, on various occasions, to take on themselves the obligation of a vow. This they did either as a testimony of gratitude to God for benefits conferred on them, or as a method of conciliating the divine favor when they were in distress. The kind of vow which these four men had taken agrees sufficiently well, as to all the circumstances mentioned, with the vow of Nazariteship. This was a voluntary vow, by which a person devoted himself peculiarly to the Lord for a season. The person was required to abstain from wine and all strong drink; from grapes, and every thing that was the growth of the vine, "from the kernels even to the husk." His hair was not to be cut; and he was most strictly to keep himself from all ceremonial defilement. When the period for which he had vowed this peculiar consecration was completed, he was to present an oblation to the Lord, of some cost, by means of the priest, to have his hair cut off and put into the fire of the altar. See the sixth chapter of Numbers. These four men were probably poor, and waiting for some one to assist them in the expense incurred by their vow.

24 *Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things whereof they*

24. *Them take; associate thyself with them, as a partaker of their vow.* || *And purify thyself with them; unite with them in the abstinence and ceremonial purification involved in their vow.* During the obligation of a vow, the person concerned abstained from various matters which would at other times be entirely lawful, and devoted himself more especially to prayer and ablution, and other religious acts. Thus the Nazarite, as was enjoined in the sixth chapter of Numbers, abstained from wine and grapes, and was uncommonly careful in regard to ceremonial purity. It is to such observances that the term *purifying* was applied. || *Be at charges with them.* The meaning is, Bear the expenses connected with their vow; defray the pecuniary charges of these men. At the termination of the time appointed, an oblation and a sacrifice were required from one who had taken a Nazarite's vow. See Num. 6:14, 15. Nor could he be released from his vow, till this requisition was complied with. In order to relieve a person from the expenses connected with a vow, in case of inability to bear them, friends, or others, would become parties to the vow, and defray the expenses. Such an act was regarded as an instance of singular piety and regard to the law. || *That they may share their heads.* Persons who had taken the vow of Nazariteship let their hair grow; and when the time mentioned in the vow was completed, their hair was cut off, and burnt in the fire which was used at the sacrifice. The hair, then, could not be cut off, unless the sacrifice was procured; and, as this was the closing part of the ceremony, the expression, *to shave their heads*, was often used to signify a release from the obligation of the vow. Hence Josephus, in his Antiquities

were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they

of the Jews (book xix. 6. 1.), relates of king Agrippa the First, that on an occasion of his coming to Jerusalem, "he ordained that many of the Nazarites should have their heads shorn;" that is, should be released from their vows by his munificence in defraying their expenses. The men for whom Paul was requested to bear expense, were probably poor men, who would have suffered much inconvenience without some friendly assistance, as they would be detained from their ordinary employments. || *That those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; amount to nothing*, that is, are false.

25. *As touching the Gentiles which believe, &c.* The apostle James and the elders wished to assure Paul, that their advice did not proceed from a desire to overlook the decision which had been formed concerning converts from among the Gentiles, as recorded in the 15th chapter. It was not in regard to the Gentile Christians, that any difficulty was apprehended; for, by the council held in Jerusalem, it had been decided that the external rites of the Jewish religion should not be considered as binding on them. But the Jewish Christians were, in many instances, extremely jealous of Paul, as he so strenuously maintained the inefficacy of Jewish ceremonies, fearing that he would diminish the reverence which, they felt, was still due to Moses from Jewish Christians. The aim of James and of the elders was simply, to convince the Jewish Christians that the reports which had reached them of Paul's renunciation of Moses, and of his forbidding converted Jews, who lived out of Palestine, to have their children circumcised, and to perform other Mosaic cere-

monies, were untrue. They hoped thus to prevent odium from being heaped on him, and a hinderance from being thrown in the way of the Christian Jews' union with him.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment

nies, were untrue. They hoped thus to prevent odium from being heaped on him, and a hinderance from being thrown in the way of the Christian Jews' union with him.

26. *Then Paul took the men.* He acceded to the advice, and at once entered on the proposed course. By so doing, he hoped to give a proof that it was not his practice to forbid the converted Jews, who lived among the Gentiles, to observe Jewish customs. He held, in reality, that they might observe those customs or not; but that, whether they observed them or not, their acceptance with God depended on their embracing the gospel — that is, their believing in Jesus. || *Purifying himself with them; entering with them on the course, or process, of ceremonial purifying, by abstinence and special religious exercises.* || *Entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days, &c.;* went into the temple, to make known to the officiating priests how many days were to pass before the purification would be accomplished; in other words, to announce how long a time he was to spend in these exercises with the four men. It was necessary that the priests should know beforehand, so that all needed arrangements for terminating the vow might be in readiness. The men had been thus occupied for some time, and Paul associated himself with them for the residue of the time, which, as appears from the following verse, was seven days.

But was it morally right in Paul to perform such an act for the purpose of conciliating the Jewish Christians, or of showing them that he had not forbidden converted Jews to continue practising Mosaic cere-

of the days of purification, until

monies? Some writers regard Paul as, on this occasion, carrying his principle of accommodation to an unjustifiable extent, and as putting to hazard the leading doctrines of the gospel, and exposing himself to the charge of duplicity. The actual result, too, of his complying with the advice that had been given him, may by some be considered as indicating the divine displeasure. For it was while he was in the temple, engaged in services connected with the vow, that some Jews from abroad seized him; and thus commenced the troubles, which issued in his being delivered up to the Roman power. We cannot, however, always determine that disastrous events indicate the displeasure of God, since they sometimes occur most evidently in connection with the performance of duty. Whether Paul carried his principle of accommodation too far, and would probably make an erroneous impression respecting his real opinions and conduct, must depend on the existing circumstances. These cannot be so well known to us as to warrant our drawing an inference unfavorable to the judiciousness of such men as the apostles James and Paul, and the elders in Jerusalem. The case was fully before them; and many minute circumstances which would bear directly and powerfully on the question, were present to their minds, of which we may have no conception. In regard to the moral quality of the conduct, we may rest assured that the clear-sighted, self-denying, and determined Paul — to say nothing of James and the elders — would not venture on an expedient that would have been at all criminal, or that would have compromised the cardinal principles of the gospel. To us, at this distant day, it may seem that it would have been more judicious for Paul to have wholly declined entering into the vow, and seeking, in a direct way, to show the converted Jews that the reports concerning him were false. We may

that an offering should be offered

naturally ask, Would it not have been better to make a full and candid explanation of his views, in some public manner, than to perform a ceremonial act of the Jewish religion, and leave the people to draw their own conclusion respecting his sentiments? But, in thus marking out a course of proceeding, we are more liable to erroneous judgment than James and Paul could be, who were in the very midst of the people whose minds were to be influenced.

We may form a more correct and satisfactory opinion respecting the apostle's conduct, by considering the precise point of difficulty concerning him among the converted Jews in Judea. A report had reached them, that Paul had positively taught the Jews abroad, who had become Christians, wholly to lay aside the Mosaic ceremonies, and that he had insisted on its being wrong for them to circumcise their children, and to observe other Jewish customs. Now, this report was a false one. Paul had never so taught. He considered the Mosaic ceremonies, now that Christ had introduced the gospel, as matters of indifference, which might be performed, or neglected, with a good conscience. He could not enjoin them, indeed, as matters of *religious duty*; for this would conflict with the simplicity of the gospel. But if any Jew's conscience was not sufficiently enlightened to allow him to lay them wholly aside, Paul would not only consent that he should practise them, but he would himself, out of accommodation to such a person's views, practise them, provided he would not, by so doing, conflict with the evangelical principle of acceptance with God solely by faith in Christ. He would not encourage any to rely on Moses for salvation, but on Christ. Still, if this great principle of reliance on Christ alone for salvation was adopted and acted on, he would not forbid Jews, who adopted it, to continue the religious customs to which they had been habituated; those re-

for every one of them.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews, which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

ligious customs not being necessarily in conflict with the gospel. Such were his views. And a decisive way to show the falseness of the reports which had been circulated respecting his sentiments, would be to perform some public act that would show his reverence for Moses, and his willingness to conform to the conscientious scruples of his brethren. Thus he would show that he did not, as had been represented, despise the law of Moses, and condemn it as evil. Nor need we suppose an intention on the part of the apostle to make any persons believe that he always, and in all places, strictly kept the law of Moses; it was enough that he did not *forbid* the ceremonies of that law. He might be considered as walking orderly and keeping the law, if he showed a becoming reverence for it, and a conformity to it, when circumstances should require, or justify, such a conformity. And while Paul would show by this public act, that he had not taught converted Jews to regard the Mosaic ceremonies as evil, he would yet, on any proper occasion, vindicate *his* liberty to perform them or not, as well as that of converted Gentiles. He would not be guilty of any dissimulation. While he revered Moses, and was willing, in given circumstances, to conform to his law, he held Jesus Christ to be his Master and Saviour. Yet he would go as far as he could, with a good conscience, to prevent a rupture between himself and his brethren in Judea.

27. *When the seven days were almost ended; that is, the seven days during which Paul was to be associated with the men who had made the vow.* || *The Jews which were of Asia; of Proconsular Asia, in which Paul had been so active in planting the gospel.* Besides being very success-

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help. This is the man that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further, brought Greeks also into the temple; and hath polluted this holy place.

ful in planting the gospel, he had here encountered great opposition. See 19: 9. 20: 3. The ill-disposed Jews of Asia would gladly seize an opportunity, in Jerusalem, to wreak their vengeance on the apostle. As the festival of the Pentecost occurred at this time (20: 16), Jews had come to Jerusalem from all quarters.

28. *Help; help to apprehend this man and to bring him to punishment.* || *This is the man that teacheth — against the people; against the Jewish people.* Paul's enemies calumniously represented him as having no respect for the Jews, as a distinct people. The course he was pursuing, as a preacher of the gospel, they affected to consider as directly at variance with the expectations of the Jews. In this way, probably, they abused the apostle's doctrine, that Jews were not now specially in favor with Heaven, but that Gentiles as well as Jews might obtain the benefits of the Messiah's reign. || *And the law; the law of Moses.* They exclaimed against Paul as an opposer of the Jewish law. See v. 21. || *And this place; the temple.* Paul taught the spiritual nature of true religion, and the utter inefficacy of mere external service, whether performed in the temple at Jerusalem or elsewhere. Perhaps, too, he had warned the Jews, that their temple itself might be destroyed. Hence, the Jews could easily raise a report against him, that he was destitute of all sacred regard for the temple and unfriendly to it. They well knew, how easily the people around would be excited against Paul by such charges, amounting to an accusation of having lost all patriotism, and all religion. || *And hath polluted this holy place.* Reference was made to that part of the temple which was forbidden to

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and

any but Jews. There was attached to the temple *a court for the Gentiles*, beyond which they were not allowed to pass. The court of the Gentiles was separated by a stone partition three cubits high; at suitable distances, there were pillars on which was inscribed in the Greek and Latin languages a prohibition that no foreigner should go within the sanctuary; the name *sanctuary*, or holy place, being applied to a higher apartment, where were deposited the golden candlestick, the golden table, and the altar of incense. See Luke 1:9-11. Gentiles were forbidden to go into the holy place, because they were held to be unclean, and their presence would be considered as defiling it.

29. *For they had seen before with him in the city, Trophimus.* See 20:4. Trophimus had accompanied Paul on his journey to Jerusalem. || *Whom they supposed*, &c. The clamor which these Jews raised against Paul, was wholly without provocation on his part. They were anxious to excite a tumult against him. In the absence of a just ground of offence, they took up a false report, and added to it a mere supposition of their own, as a means of calling forth the popular indignation.

30. *They drew him out of the temple.* They were desirous to kill him without delay in the midst of the tumult (see v. 31), and therefore hastened him out of the temple, because the temple would be defiled by shedding human blood in it. Compare 2 Kings 11:15, where it is related that the priest Jehoiada commanded respecting Athaliah, "Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord." || *Forthwith the doors were shut.* This was a cautionary measure on the part of the Levites, who had the care of the temple. By

they took Paul and drew him out of the temple. And forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar;

shutting the doors and remaining in the temple, they might think to free themselves from any responsibility for violence which the multitude might inflict on Paul. Had the doors been left open, too, the crowd might have come back into the temple, and the designed murder might have taken place there, and the temple have been defiled. Perhaps, the measure was designed to prevent Paul from escaping back into the temple, and claiming the protection of the sanctuary. For had he fled to the altar, Jewish custom would have regarded him as at a peculiarly sacred spot, and as entitled to protection. See 1 Kings 1:50, 51. 2:28-31.

31. *As they went about to kill him*; as they endeavored, or sought opportunity to kill him, for having, as was pretended, polluted the temple by taking a Gentile into it. An uncircumcised person, passing beyond the court of the Gentiles into the sanctuary, exposed himself to be summarily put to death. This, however, would not justify the Jews in seeking to kill Paul; but they would feel themselves justified in such an act, by religious zeal for the purity of the temple. || *Tidings came to the chief captain of the band.* There was always a number of Roman soldiers stationed in Jerusalem; and their barracks were in the fortress Antonia near the temple. A detachment of armed soldiers also kept guard in the porticoes of the temple which surrounded the court of the Gentiles, during the festival days, when there was danger of tumults among the people. From some of these soldiers, tidings could easily be carried to their commanding officer. *The chief captain* was the Roman tribune, the highest military officer then in the city, having command of soldiers vary-

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them. And when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains: and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

ing, according to circumstances, from three hundred to one thousand. The name of this officer was Claudius Lysias. 23:26.

33. *The chief captain — commanded him to be bound with two chains.* The order was, doubtless, at once executed. His feet and hands, probably, were chained, yet not so closely as to hinder the moderate use of them. This summary chaining of Paul was designed, perhaps, both to intimidate him, and to satisfy the crowd that he should be kept safely. So turbulent and seditious were the Jews at the times of the great festivals, when so many were assembled at Jerusalem, that the Roman authorities would feel justified in acts of violence which probably they would not, at other times and in other places, regard as proper. || *And demanded who he was, &c.* The tribune made this inquiry,—as appears from the next verse,—not of Paul, but of the by-standers who were so active against him.

34. *He commanded him to be carried into the castle;* the fortress Antonia, or, rather, the soldiers' barracks there. Antonia was the name of a very strong fortress, so situated as to command the temple. It was more anciently called *Baris*; but, after being greatly strengthened by Herod the Great, its name was changed, in honor of the Roman Marcus Antonius.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers, for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, *Away with him.*

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, *May I speak unto thee?* Who said, *Canst thou speak Greek?*

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand

35. *When he came upon the stairs;* the stairs which led up from a portico of the temple into the fortress. || *He was borne of the soldiers;* he was lifted up and carried by the soldiers, so as to be defended from the rage of the people.

37. *As Paul was to be led into the castle;* as he was about to be led. || *He said unto the chief captain, &c.* Paul was desirous of an opportunity to address the Jews (v. 39) before they should disperse, as they would after he should be safely lodged in the fortress. || *Canst thou speak Greek?* The suspicions of the Roman officer respecting Paul were such, that he was surprised to hear him speak in the Greek language. He believed him to be a fanatical Jew, too ignorant to speak in any other language than that which prevailed among the Jews in Palestine, and also in Egypt, where vast numbers of Jews resided, and maintained their national customs.

38. *Art not thou that Egyptian, &c.* Not very long before the time here spoken of, an Egyptian Jew, as we learn from Josephus (Antiquities, book xx. 8. 6), came to Judea, pretending to be a prophet, and gathered around him a large number of disaffected and violent men. He prevailed on them to follow him to mount Olivet, with the promise that they should see the walls of Jerusalem fall down, and that a passage

men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake

unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

CHAPTER XXII.

1 Paul declarereth at large how he was converted to the faith, 17 and called to his apostleship. 22 At the very mentioning of the Gentiles, the people exclaim on him. 24 He should have been scourged, 25 but claiming the privilege of a Roman, he escapeth.

should be opened for them into the city, as its conquerors. Felix, the governor, or procurator, of Judea, took timely measures to defeat the false prophet. Four hundred of the insurgents were killed in battle; two hundred were taken prisoners; and the rest, together with their leader, found safety in flight. || *Four thousand men.* Josephus mentions, in his Jewish War (book ii. 13. 5), the number of thirty thousand men as this false prophet's adherents. But probably there is a mistake in the copies of Josephus, as the several places where he speaks of this rufian and impostor do not agree as to numbers, though they agree as to the material facts. Luke may be considered as stating the number that originally went out with him into the desert, and who were the most determined of his followers; while it can scarcely be doubted, that this number became considerably increased by accessions while they were in the desert. || *That were murderers.* During the times here spoken of, there were large companies of abandoned Jews who devoted themselves to plunder and murder. They wore concealed daggers, and committed the most violent outrages. From the Latin word *sica* (*a dagger*), the Greek word was formed which is here translated *murderers*. The name *sicarii* came at length to be applied to such banditti, whether they used daggers or any other murderous weapons.

39. *I am—a Jew of Tarsus.* See on 9:11, 30. 11:25. || *No mean city.* Tarsus was a celebrated city. It

ranked with Athens and Alexandria, and was distinguished for the number of its schools and learned men. It had, also, the distinction of being a free city; that is, though it was dependent on the Roman empire, yet it had the privilege of being governed by laws and magistrates of its own choosing, and enjoyed freedom from tribute to the emperor. See on 9:11.

40. *Paul stood on the stairs.* Compare 35th verse. || *He spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue;* the language which was spoken by the Jews in Judea in the time of Christ and the apostles. It was, properly, a degenerate form of the old Hebrew, though it was still popularly called Hebrew.

CHAPTER XXII.

In the address which Paul made to the Jewish multitude, his aim appears to have been to repel the charge, which had been raised against him, of being an opposer of Moses, and of having become an enemy of the Jews; and to show that he was not a contemner of the Mosaic law, while yet the hand of God was most evident in leading him to become a follower of Jesus as the Messiah. He refers to the place and manner of his education, to his former zeal in defence of the Jewish religion, and to the remarkable manner in which he was led to become a Christian. And in regard to his laboring so much among the Gentiles, this, too, he traces, not so much to his own choice as to an impulse from God—a

MEN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and de-

call which he was not at liberty to resist. At this point, the hostility of his hearers was again aroused; and they gave vent to their malignant feelings, by exclaiming against him as unworthy to live.

1. *Men, brethren, and fathers.* See on 7:2. Though it was a tumultuous assembly the apostle was addressing, yet he would employ respectful epithets. There were probably in the crowd some of the more respectable, as well as those who were little worthy of consideration.

2. *They kept the more silence.* They were pleased at hearing the language of the country, and listened attentively. As Paul was known to have spent the most of his life out of Palestine, and had had so much communication with Gentiles, and as the Jews present had become prejudiced against him for his supposed hostility to Jewish principles, they were probably surprised to hear him speak in their native tongue.

3. *Brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel;* educated, as we say, *under Gamaliel.* In the Jewish schools, the pupils sat either on the floor, or on low seats, while the teacher occupied an elevated position. Gamaliel is believed to be the same as gave so wise advice to the Jewish sanhedrim, at an earlier period of the Christian history. See

livering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders; from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me,

5:34. || *Taught according to the perfect manner of the law, &c.*; according to the exact discipline of the law of Moses, as then explained and inculcated by the Jewish rabbis. The traditional observances are here included, as well as those which were enjoined by divine authority. || *Was zealous toward God;* zealous for the honor of God. Zeal for the Mosaic law and the traditions, as being appointed of God, was regarded as zeal for the divine honor.

4. *I persecuted this way;* or, those who adopted the Christian way of life. || *Binding and delivering into prisons, &c.* See 9:2.

5. *As also the high priest doth bear me witness.* See 9:1. The high priest, at the time to which Paul is here referring, and who encouraged him in persecuting the Christians, was Theophilus. He appears from this verse to have been still alive, though it would seem, from 23:2, he was not occupying the office of high priest at the time of Paul's addressing his countrymen, as related in this chapter. He still, however, out of respect and courtesy, was honored with the title. || *All the estate of the elders;* all the Jewish sanhedrim. || *From whom also I received letters.* See 9:2. || *Unto the brethren;* the Jews.

6-13. Compare 9:3-17.

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were

with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash

14. *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee.* It was very common, among the first Christians, to acknowledge the special mercy of God in selecting them as partakers of his renewing and pardoning love. Compare Gal. 1: 15. Eph. 1: 4. || *And see that Just One;* namely, the Lord Jesus. Compare 3: 14. 7: 52. Paul may be said to have *seen* Jesus, when the more than noonday splendor with which the voice that addressed him was accompanied, met his eyes. See 26: 16, where the expressions used will show that Paul might well be said to have seen Jesus, though the splendor of the Lord's appearance was such as to make him sightless for a season. Or, the expression, "that thou shouldest see that Just One," may be the same as, that thou shouldest *know* that Just One, and have a right apprehension of his character and dignity.

15. *Thou shalt be his witness — of what thou hast seen and heard.* The things which Paul had seen and heard, on the memorable day of his conversion, were immensely important, not only to him personally, but also to the cause of Christ at large, as showing that Jesus was indeed raised up from the dead, and was clothed with the majesty of the Mes-

siah. These things were, therefore, to be publicly made known, as testifying to the authority of the Lord Jesus. This appearance of Jesus to Paul had an importance, also, in respect to the apostle's authority; for some personal knowledge of Jesus appears to have been necessary as a qualification for the office of an apostle, so that his testimony might be a valid one. Compare 1: 22. 1 Cor. 9: 1.

16. *Be baptized, and wash away thy sins.* The gospel regards all men as sinners, needing not only forgiveness, but also the purifying of their hearts from sin. This purity of heart, produced by the Holy Spirit's influences, and a reception of Christ as the crucified and risen Saviour, is emblematically signified by the ordinance of baptism in the purifying element of water. Hence a believer in Christ, when receiving baptism, may justly be said, in a figure, to be washing away his sins; as he is, by that ordinance, showing externally what has been commenced in his soul, and is manifesting his serious purpose, through divine influences, perpetually to cultivate holiness of heart and life. Baptism is the external public entrance on the Christian life; so that the Christian may be said at

away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusa-

his baptism to lay aside his sins, to cleanse himself from moral defilement, and to commence a new life. As the body is made clean by water, so the soul is cleansed by divine grace ; and what is thus inwardly performed, is outwardly expressed by this significant emblem. It was customary, also, in the first years of the gospel, for some external token to be granted from above at the administration of baptism, as showing God's approval of the act, and acceptance of the persons ; and thus the finishing evidence of pardon and of acknowledged discipleship was bestowed in connection with baptism ; so that that ordinance was eminently a washing away of the person's sins. The external token to which reference is made, was the imparting of special gifts by which God manifested his approbation of the Saviour's followers, and fitted them for giving effectual testimony to the gospel. And not unfrequently, in every succeeding age, has it been the case, that the reception of baptism has been honored by the Lord, as the occasion of a peculiar manifestation to the soul of his pardoning mercy and sanctifying power. By an examination of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it will also be seen that baptism was designed as a figurative representation of a burial and a resurrection, — a burial to sin and a resurrection to a new life, — and as an acknowledgment of the Saviour's burial and resurrection, by which pardon, holiness, and eternal life, are secured to the believer. These views of baptism ought to be combined. It is significant of *spiritual cleansing*, procured in *consequence of the Saviour's death and resurrection* : hence we are buried in baptism (Rom. 6 : 4. Col. 2 : 12), wherein also we arise to newness of life ; and thus baptism is not the putting away of the filth of

lem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance ;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee

the flesh (1 Pet. 3 : 21), but the answer [the declaration, the profession] of a good conscience towards God, a conscience made happy towards God, by the resurrection of Christ. || *Calling on the name of the Lord* ; of the Lord Jesus, in acknowledgment of now being his disciple and worshipper. Such an acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah and Lord was made in immediate connection with baptism, and may even be said to be involved in being baptized in his name. The newly converted were to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, thus owning him as their Lord, and themselves as his disciples and followers. See 2 : 38. 8 : 16, 37, 38. From 9 : 18, we learn that the directions of Ananias were promptly complied with.

17. *When I was come again to Jerusalem.* Paul refers here, probably, to that instance of his coming to Jerusalem which is recorded in 9 : 26, and which was his first visit after his conversion to Christianity. || *While I prayed in the temple.* Paul had been accused of cherishing a disposition hostile to the temple. See 21 : 28. But the mention of his having resorted to the temple for prayer after he had become a Christian, would tend to show that he had not become a despiser of that sacred place, or a neglecter of the divinely appointed methods of seeking God's favor. || *I was in a trance.* While intensely occupied in prayer, he fell into a state of insensibility as to his bodily powers. His mind, however, was still active, and, as the next verse informs us, was favored with a special communication from the Lord Jesus.

18. *And saw him* ; the Lord Jesus, mentioned in the 16th verse. Paul saw him *in his mind*. || *Saying — they will not receive thy testimony, &c.* The idea was conveyed in this communication, not only that Paul's tes-

quickly out of Jerusalem ; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee :

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also

timony would be rejected, but that violence would be attempted against his person.

19, 20. *And I said, &c.* Paul seems to have had the impression, when he first became a Christian, that his testimony respecting Jesus would appear to the Jews in Jerusalem peculiarly weighty, and hence to have heard with some surprise this direction to depart from the city. He had been so extensively known as a determined opposer of Jesus and his followers, that his conversion, he thought, could not be regarded otherwise than as proceeding from sincere and deep conviction ; as being well founded, and therefore suited to impress others, and lead them to calm consideration and a change of mind. || *I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue, &c.* Compare 9: 2 26: 10, 11. The punishment of scourging was inflicted at the Jewish synagogues on those who were held guilty of certain offences against the religion, of the nation. Such were the established modes of government among the Jews in respect to religious matters, that those of them who had become Christians were still liable to be summoned before Jewish authorities, and to be dealt with as apostates from the faith, or as disturbers of the nation's religious peace. Jews who had become Christians still continued, notwithstanding their new faith and worship, to frequent the synagogues.

20. *When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed.* Compare 7: 57, 58. 8: 1. The word *martyr*, in the Greek language, originally signified *a witness*. As the early witnesses for Christ often suffered death for their religion, and thus sealed their testi-

mony by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart : for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with

mony with their blood, the word was afterwards applied, by way of eminence, to those who suffered death for their adherence to Christ. Stephen was, indeed, a martyr ; he *bore witness* for the Lord Jesus before the chief authorities of the Jewish nation, and yielded himself up to a *violent death* on account of his testimony.

21. *And he said unto me, Depart, &c.* The Lord's repeated direction to Paul to depart from the city, and to labor in other regions, and especially among the Gentiles, showed him that his hopes of being favorably heard in Jerusalem would prove delusive. From 9: 29, 30, we learn that the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem had conceived the purpose of putting Paul to death ; and, in consequence of this, his Christian brethren made arrangements for his departure from the city, whence he went to Tarsus. The advice of his brethren would be seen, of course, to coincide with the divine vision ; and facts were ascertained, such as the divine warning would lead him to expect. He could, then, have no doubt as to the path of duty. He accordingly retired from Jerusalem, awaiting further disclosures of the Lord's will respecting his labors.

22. *They gave him audience unto this word.* They heard him attentively up to the moment of his mentioning the direction to go to the Gentiles. The Jews were constantly indulging the belief, that they only were the people of God, and hence they could not patiently endure the thought that the Gentiles were to be placed on as favorable a footing as themselves. They did, indeed, believe that Gentiles might participate

such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful

for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free-born*.

in the blessings of the Messiah; but for this it was necessary, in their view, that the Gentiles should first become proselytes to the Jewish religion, and thus be candidates for the Messiah's favor. The multitude now present, however, had regarded Paul as greatly undervaluing the Jewish religion: they knew his belief, that Gentiles might become the Messiah's friends directly, without submission to Jewish ceremonies. The mention of his being sent to the Gentiles excited all these recollections afresh, and they gave way to passionate excitement against him.

23. *Cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.* By throwing off and casting up their loose, outside garments, they expressed their approval of the tumult, which had now become renewed, and their readiness to join in endeavoring to seize Paul, and take his life. The tossing up of garments was a significant act in the East, expressing approval of what was going forward and joy at it. Throwing dust into the air was also designed to express and to promote excitement. The multitude was evidently bent on taking Paul's life.

24. *The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle.* Paul was, as yet, on the stairs which led up to the castle. See 21: 40. || *And bade that he should be examined by scourging.* As the Roman tribune was ignorant of the language in which Paul had been addressing the people, he could not yet see the ground of

their excitement against him; and presuming that he must have been guilty of some crime, he determined to extort a confession from Paul. Scourging and other tortures were anciently in use among the Romans, in the process of examining a person who was deemed, or suspected, to be a criminal. Paul was accordingly taken within the fortress; and the multitude, doubtless, dispersed.

25. *And as they bound him with thongs.* A person who was to be scourged had his hands bound, and his body fastened by leather straps to a post. || Paul said — Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman? Paul did not put this question to gain information; but to caution the centurion who was to superintend the scourging. The Roman law forbade that a Roman citizen should be thus treated. See on 16: 37.

28. *And the chief captain answered.* He at once believed Paul's declaration. The Roman law provided that, if a person deceitfully claimed to be a Roman, his false pretence exposed him to capital punishment. A solemn and repeated declaration, therefore, to this effect, could be confided in. See 16: 38. || *With a great sum obtained I this freedom.* So valued was the privilege of being a Roman citizen, that no price was held too great to procure it. || *And Paul said, But I was free-born.* Some one of Paul's ancestors had obtained the privilege of citizenship, and it descended to Paul by inheritance. See on 16: 37.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear,

29. *And the chief captain was afraid, &c.* He had exposed himself to severe penalties for thus treating a Roman before conviction. || *And because he had bound him.* Compare the 25th verse. Reference does not seem to be made here to the fact stated in 21: 33, of the tribune's having ordered Paul to be bound with two chains; since the Roman officer does not appear to have set him free from his chains. For on the next day (v. 30), in order for Paul to appear before the sanhedrim, his bands [chains] were removed, temporarily, or partially, at least. It is also supposed that the apostle's citizenship was not of the highest order, which would exempt its possessor from chains, as well as from scourging, before conviction of a crime; but of a lower order, which would not have been violated by chaining, though it would have been by scourging. From Paul's silence, also, respecting his being chained, it is reasonable to suppose that the tribune had not, by this act, transcended the limits of the Roman law. Reference is therefore had here to Paul's being bound with belts, in order to be scourged.

30. *He would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused, &c.* He wished to ascertain the real ground of Paul's being apprehended by the Jews. || *He loosed him from his bands;* from the chains which had been put on him the day before. 21: 33. This was only a temporary removal of his bands, for the sake of his appearing before the sanhedrim; for in the subsequent notices, Paul ap-

and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1 As Paul pleadeth his cause, 2 Ananias commandeth them to smite him. 7 Dissension among his accusers. 11 God encourageth him. 14 The Jews' laying wait for Paul 20 is declared unto the chief captain. 27 He sendeth him to Felix the governor

AND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and

pears to be still wearing a chain. See 24: 27. 25: 27. 26: 29. In all probability, the chief captain, on obtaining some insight into the affair, or simply because Paul was a Roman, removed the chains which had at first been used, and afterwards, perhaps after he had appeared before the sanhedrim, placed him in *military custody*, on account of his being an accused person awaiting a legal examination. This kind of confinement continued, probably, till Paul's case was decided. 28: 16. There were two species of confinement, which the Roman law allowed in respect to citizens. One of these was called *free custody*, and consisted in the accused person's being detained in the house of a magistrate, or in some suitable person's becoming responsible for his safe keeping. The other was *military custody*, and consisted in the accused person's being fastened by a chain to a soldier; the right hand of the accused being secured to the left of the soldier by a chain of some length. || *He — commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear;* he required the Jewish sanhedrim to have a session. || *And brought Paul down;* down from the castle Antonia, in which the tribune was detaining him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1. *Paul earnestly beholding the council;* looking on the members of the sanhedrim with the unapproached air of a man conscious of integrity, willing to have all his acts scrutinized, and cherishing a strong confidence

brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest Ananias

in God. || *I have lived in all good conscience, &c.* The apostle meant to disavow at once all evil intentions, and all disregard of religious duty in the whole course of his life. From the time of his conversion to Christianity, he had been eminently devoted to God and the promotion of true religion. And previously to that time, while yet a bigoted Jew, he even then thought himself conscientious, though his conscience was ill-informed. He declared on another occasion (26: 9), that even in persecuting the Christians (which he came afterwards to consider an unspeakably criminal course of conduct), he verily thought he was discharging his duty. His life, while he was connected with the Jewish religion, was one of exemplary regard to the Mosaic law. See Phil. 3: 4—6.

2. This undaunted declaration by Paul of his habitual conscientiousness excited the high priest's indignation, and drew from him an unjust and overbearing stretch of his power.—*The high priest Ananias commanded those that stood by him to smite him on the mouth*; as indicating that he had uttered a gross falsehood, and had cast reproach on the whole sanhedrim, as though they had assembled to try an innocent and pious man. The firm aspect of Paul, as of a man against whom no just charge of guilt could be proved, his direct avowal of religious integrity, without any fawning attempts to secure favor, and the fact that he was no longer in the power of the Jews, but, as a Roman citizen, in the care and under the direction of the tribune, all these circumstances conspired to provoke the high priest's anger, and his undignified and ill-judged outrage on the person of Paul. *Those that stood by Paul*, and that were commanded to inflict this abuse on him, were the official attendants, or servants, of the Jewish court. The high priest Ana-

commanded them that stood by him, to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou whited wall*:

nias, here named, was the person who several years before had been high priest, but who had been sent a prisoner to Rome, by Quadratus, the Roman president of Syria, to answer before the emperor Claudius for his conduct. He was, however, by the intercession of Agrippa II., ruler of the northern districts of Palestine, permitted to return to Jerusalem, though he was not reinstated in the high priesthood. Jonathan had been made high priest in his place, but had previously to this time been put to death by the management of Felix, procurator of Judea, who employed some of the Jewish banditti, called *sicarii*, or murderers (21: 38), to perpetrate the deed. No successor had as yet been appointed; but the office was vacant. Still, we need not suppose, with some, that Ananias had usurped the office. He may have been performing its duties provisionally, till a regular appointment should be made. Ananias was, according to Josephus' description, an ambitious, avaricious, and cruel man.

3. *Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee*; an expression of deep indignation at the inexcusable outrage which had been committed. It has been questioned, whether this is to be understood as an imprecation by Paul of God's vengeance on Ananias, or as a prediction that God would signally punish such a high-handed act of injustice. Probably, neither of these views alone presents the whole case. There was, we may believe, in Paul's breast, a mixture of honest and too much excited indignation at the abuse, with a deep feeling that the God of justice would not allow such an act to pass unavenged. Josephus relates, that Ananias met with a violent death from the hands of the Jewish banditti, while attempting to elude their rage by concealing himself in an aqueduct. They drew him forth from his concealment, and

for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

murdered him. || *Thou whited wall*; thou consummate hypocrite! The force of the figure is seen, if we conceive of a wall with the outside surface well whitewashed, while the materials within are chiefly dirt and rubbish; or, while the wall conceals from sight masses of corrupt matter behind. The figure is very much like that which our Lord employed (Matt. 23: 27) to show the hypocrisy of the Pharisees—"Ye are like unto whitened [whitewashed] sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." As helping us to form an opinion on the question, whether Paul is to be justified in applying so opprobrious an epithet to the acting high priest, we may compare our Saviour's conduct on an occasion somewhat similar. John 18: 19—23. He had been struck in the presence of the high priest; but without any excitement, or the least approach to anger, he merely said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" The best of men may in a moment of excitement speak unadvisedly with their lips, and have occasion to confess that they are but men. The Lord Jesus is our only perfect pattern. Compare 1 Pet. 2: 21—23. 4: 16. || *Commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?* The law of Moses required that an accused person should have a fair hearing, and that his cause should be carefully examined. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment," was the divine direction in Lev. 19: 15. And in Deut. 19: 18, judges are required to make diligent inquisition; and in Deut. 19: 15, it was directed that "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." The spirit of these injunctions was violated by the high priest.

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

4. *Revilest thou God's high priest?* that is, by applying to him such an epithet as Paul had used.

5. *Then said Paul, I wist not—that he was, &c.*; I knew not; meaning, I considered not. The apostle seems to acknowledge, that he had been betrayed into a hasty and unjustifiable manner of speaking. His prompt confession of his fault shows us the tenderness of his conscience, and his freedom from that false sense of honor which will rather persist in a wrong course than make confession. Ananias was not, indeed, properly speaking, the high priest, as is stated in the note on the second verse; and some have hence concluded that Paul meant ironically to say, I do not acknowledge him as the high priest. Had this been his intention, however, he would have used a different word. And though Ananias was occupying the high priesthood only provisionally, yet he occupied the place of the high priest, and was, to all intents and purposes, for the time being, high priest, and entitled to all the external respect which belonged to the office. Some have also supposed, that Paul was really ignorant whether Ananias was in any sense acknowledged as high priest, as Paul had been long absent from Jerusalem, and only a few days had elapsed since his return. This, however, is extremely improbable. The very seat which Ananias occupied in the Jewish court, would point him out as the high priest; and as Paul is said to have *earnestly* beheld the council, he must have seen its president. The high priest was, by virtue of his office, the president of the sanhedrim. It is altogether preferable to understand the apostle according to the natural intent of his words, as acknowledging that he had spoken rashly. || *For it is written, &c.* See Ex. 22: 28.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren,

6. *But when Paul perceived, &c.;* more literally, “But Paul, knowing that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees.” He did not now for the first time perceive this; he knew it beforehand, and now availed himself of this fact to procure, from those members of the court who were Pharisees, a declaration of his freedom from crime. Paul had been brought before the court at the instance of the Roman tribune, that this officer might ascertain the ground of the Jews’ violent proceedings against him. It was important, then, that the tribune should be led to see that the Jews could not lay against him any valid charge. As a means of accomplishing this, he secured in his behalf, at least for a short time, the favor of the Pharisees, by professing,—and that, too, with the utmost sincerity,—to agree with them in the points wherein they differed from the Sadducees. So far as those points were concerned, he avowed himself a Pharisee; and he reduced the contention between himself and the Jews to the simple tenet of there being a resurrection of the dead—a tenet which the Sadducees resolutely opposed. Thus the two parties in the sanhedrim were brought into conflict with one another; and, under the influence of hostility to the Sadducees, the Pharisees asserted the innocence of Paul, affirming, “We find no evil in this man.” In this way, Paul brought the matter to a speedy issue; and it became evident to the tribune that he was an innocent man; that there was no just ground for proceeding against him. v. 29. In no other way, probably, could he so directly and speedily have brought the matter to a result. To Paul, it was perfectly obvious that he could expect no justice from the sanhedrim; that he should not have a fair hearing, nor right treatment. But

I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

could he in some allowable way make it evident to the tribune that he was merely a victim of Jewish ill-will, and that there was no just cause for proceeding against him, he would gain an important point. This he succeeded in doing. || *I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee;* a Pharisee by conviction in regard to the points of difference between the two chief sects of the Jews; and by birth. Compare 26:5. Phil. 3:5. Though Paul was now a Christian, yet, so far as the distinguishing points of doctrine were concerned between Sadducees and Pharisees, he held with the latter, and so might call himself a Pharisee. || *Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* The real ground on which the Jews proceeded against Paul was, that he was a follower of Jesus, in distinction from themselves, as professed followers of Moses. But the question whether Jesus was the Messiah, and ought, therefore, to be obeyed, did, in Paul’s judgment, and in truth, essentially affect the question whether there would be a resurrection of the dead; since all just hope of a resurrection was founded on the fact of there being a Messiah, or Saviour, and of Jesus’ being that Saviour. If Jesus were not received as the Messiah, all rational hope of a resurrection from the dead would be destroyed; for never would another person come with the proper evidences of being the Messiah, the Son of God. The question, then, whether Jesus was the Messiah, and whether Paul was right in being a Christian, involved the question whether there was hope of a resurrection unto life. Consequently, Paul placed the question between him and the Jews on the right ground, as to its practical character; and on this ground the Pharisees, who were present, would be most likely to regard Paul himself, if not

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

the gospel, with favor. Had Paul been allowed an opportunity, he would probably have gone on to prove the resurrection of Jesus, and to show the evidence, thence arising, of his being the Messiah, and to point out the connection between his resurrection and that of men to future life; and he would have made it plain, that he was now called in question respecting the hope of a resurrection from the dead. Thus he would have shown that the Pharisees, to be consistent with their belief of a resurrection, ought to become followers of Jesus; and that, if they did not become his followers, they ought to abandon the hope of a glorious resurrection.

7. *There arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.* Paul's decided avowal of his holding the Pharisic doctrine in reference to the resurrection, and his reducing of the matter in controversy between him and the Jews to that one point, brought at once the two parties in the sanhedrim into direct collision with one another, and excited an earnest dispute between them. They lost sight of the purpose for which they were assembled, and became entangled in a contention respecting their distinguishing tenets. || *The multitude was divided;* the company of people who were present also took sides in the dispute which had arisen.

8. *The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, &c.*; no resurrection of the dead; no such beings as angels; no souls of men, distinct from their bodies. They professed that, besides God, there was no spiritual being, whether good or bad, angel or fiend; and that men's minds, or spirits, died with their bodies. Com-

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 And when there arose a

pare Matt. 22: 23. || *The Pharisees confess both.* The Pharisees acknowledged both these articles of doctrine; namely, the resurrection of the body from the dead, and the existence of spiritual beings—including, under *spiritual beings*, the souls of men as separated from their bodies, and angels.

9. *The scribes—of the Pharisees' part—strove;* earnestly disputed. || *We find no evil in this man;* that is, no evil doing, no crime. They acknowledged, tacitly, at least, yet very intelligibly, that it was a matter of religious doctrine, and not criminal conduct, which had originated the proceedings against Paul. Thus the end which he had in view was gained. In the presence of the Roman tribune, at whose instance the sanhedrim had been assembled to examine Paul, the declaration was made by members of that court, that he was guilty of no crime. || *If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, &c.* The Pharisees here recollect the declaration which Paul had made the day before, respecting the supernatural appearance of Jesus to him near Damascus, and in the temple. 22: 6—8, 18—21. As such appearances accorded with their belief, and as they were now arrayed against the Sadducees, they would, for consistency's sake, express themselves as believing in the reality of such communications from spiritual beings. Probably they meant not merely to speak of those two instances, but to profess that they held themselves ready candidly to consider any views which had, at any time, been presented to Paul from above. || *Let us not fight against God.* The hostility of the Pharisees to the Sadducees led them to assume

great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

the appearance of great candor. Well had it been for them, had they acted on the principle they now appeared to defend. We cannot but be struck with the similarity of their declaration to that which Gamaliel made, when advising the sanhedrim not to persecute the apostles. See 5:39.

10. *The chief captain — commanded — to bring him into the castle.* Thus he was in the keeping, and under the protection, of the Roman tribune.

11. *The Lord stood by him, &c.* By a supernatural communication to the mind of Paul, the Lord assured him of special protection, and of his ultimately going to Rome. It appears from 19:21, that Paul had formed the purpose of visiting Rome for the sake of there preaching the gospel. At that time, doubtless, he cherished the hope that he should go thither, not as a prisoner, but in the full enjoyment of his liberty.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain, that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have

12. *Certain of the Jews — bound themselves under a curse, &c.* They agreed together that they would kill Paul at all hazards, and gave a solemn confirmation to their agreement, by imprecating the divine vengeance on themselves, if they should fail to carry their purpose into execution, before they should again eat or drink. They little considered that their purpose to kill him was itself most offensive to God, and exposed them to his displeasure. But so blinded were they by prejudice, and so destitute of correct religious views, that they indulged the belief of their really doing God service by the murderous act they were proposing. Compare John 16:2.

17. *Bring this young man unto the chief captain.* Paul's confidence in the divine care and in the promise of the Lord that he should yet see Rome (v. 11), did not hinder him from taking requisite precautions for

agreed to desire thee, that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged him, *See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.*

23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to

his safety. God's purposes are accomplished by human instrumental-ity; and a disregard by Paul of the means of preservation would have been presumptuous.

23. *To go to Cesarea.* Cesarea, on the sea-coast of Palestine, was the residence of the Roman governor. To him it was proper that Paul should be sent, with a suitable guard. || *At the third hour of the night;* corresponding to our nine o'clock.—The number of troops appointed for the safe conduct of Paul may appear unreasonably large, being four hundred and seventy. The tribune had been informed that more than forty Jews had entered into a conspiracy to take Paul's life; and he, doubtless, apprehended that they would add others to their number. Some of these Jews were, also, of that blindly zealous and murderous class, that were frequently committing the most audacious enormities, and that were well practised in all the arts of surprising and destroying the objects of their vengeance. See on 21: 38. He hoped, of course, to keep Paul entirely clear of danger, by so seasonably despatching him to Cesarea, and thus anticipating the movements of the conspirators. But it was proper

Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias, unto the most excellent governor Felix, *sendeth* greeting.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

for him to place the prisoner for whom he was responsible, under such protection as would insure his safety.

24. *Provide them beasts that they may set Paul on.* Probably two beasts were provided, one for Paul, and the other for the soldier to whom he was fastened by a chain, as his guard. The chain was of considerable length in such cases. See on 22: 30. || *Bring him safe unto Felix the governor.* The whole name of this man was Antonius Felix. He was a freedman of the emperor Claudius, and was appointed governor, or, in Roman style, procurator, of Judea. He governed the province in a vengeful and cruel manner, and appeared destitute of the generous qualities which become a ruler.

27. *Should have been killed;* was near being killed. Compare 21: 31. || *Then came I with an army.* The original word here rendered *army* is applicable to a military force, whether large or small. It means here, of course, a comparatively small detachment of soldiers. || *Having understood that he was a Roman.* Compare 22: 25—28.

28. *I brought him forth into their council.* See 22: 30.

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death, or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle :

33 Who, when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented

29, 30. The Roman tribune endeavored, in his letter to the governor, not only to show that he had himself conducted in the case with prompt fidelity and care, but also to make a favorable impression on his mind respecting Paul; thus guarding Felix against the insidious attempts which he presumed the Jews would make to the discredit of Paul. Nothing worthy of death, or of bonds, had been shown against him in respect to the civil law; and a part of the Jewish sanhedrin had declared him innocent, so far as their jurisdiction was concerned. Compare v. 9.

31. *Antipatris*; a town between Jerusalem and Cesarea, whither the troops were conducting Paul. Antipatris was built by Herod the Great, and was named by him in honor of Antipater, his father. It was about forty-two Roman miles from Jerusalem. Circumstances required a forced march; and even if two or three hours of the following morning had been required to reach Antipatris, the march would properly have been said to be taken by night.

32. *On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, &c.* As they had come so near to Cesarea, it being twenty-six miles farther, the

Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1 Paul, being accused by Tertullus the orator, 10 answereth for his life and doctrine. 24 He preacheth Christ to the governor and his wife. 26 The governor hopeth for a bribe, but in vain. 27 At last, going out of his office, he leaveth Paul in prison.

AND after five days, Ananias the high priest descended

greater part of the military force could be spared without hazard to Paul, and the troop of horse would be abundantly sufficient for protection. The greater part of the soldiers commenced their return to Jerusalem on the same day that they reached Antipatris; as they might be needed in Jerusalem to quell disturbances, which might arise in consequence of Paul's being conveyed away. || *Returned to the castle*; in Jerusalem. See 21:34.

34. *Cilicia*. See 21:39.

35. *When thine accusers are also come*. The letter of Lysias to Felix had apprized him that Paul's accusers might be expected at Cesarea. See v. 30. || *In Herod's judgment-hall*; more properly, in Herod's palace; the palace which Herod the Great had built for the royal residence in Cesarea, and which had subsequently become the residence of the Roman procurator. Paul was not confined in a prison, but was kept in some apartment of the procurator's residence, under the special care, doubtless, of a Roman soldier.

CHAPTER XXIV.

1. *After five days*. These are, probably, to be reckoned from the day of Paul's departure from Jerusa-

with the elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto

lem. || *Ananias the high priest.* See 23:2. || *Descended*; went down from Jerusalem to Cesarea. . || *With the elders*; with some of the chief men of the Jews, members of the sanhedrim. || *And with a certain orator named Tertullus.* This was a Roman lawyer, whom the Jews had employed as their advocate, to manage their cause against Paul before the Roman procurator. As the Jews were under the dominion of the Romans, and Paul, as a Roman, was to be examined before the procurator, the Jews thought it desirable to engage the professional services of a man who was acquainted with the laws and practices of the empire, and accustomed to conduct causes. Professional men of this character could be found in all the Roman provinces.

2. *Tertullus began to accuse him, &c.* In his opening speech, the Roman advocate sought to gain the governor's favor by flattering him with a finished and most undeserved commendation of his official character and conduct. He then proceeded to state the grounds of accusation against Paul, interweaving a very intelligible suspicion of the propriety of the course which Lysias, the Roman tribune, had taken. || *By thee we enjoy great quietness*; much public peace; a very insinuating thought, with which to introduce an accusation against Paul as a disturber of the nation's repose, as well as high praise, since the procuring and preserving of public tranquillity is a strong recommendation of a ruler. || *Unto this nation*; to the Jews. || *By thy providence*; by thy wise and kind foresight. — Felix had corrected some of the public disorders; he had apprehended and brought to punishment many of the robbers who had

this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee, that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

been infesting the country, and in particular had cleared Judea of the followers of two distinguished leaders, Eleazar and an Egyptian prophet, who had kept the people in a state of alarm. The Jewish and the Syrian inhabitants of Cesarea had also often indulged in mutual contentions; and these he had brought to an end. But, at the same time, he had craftily effected the murder of Jonathan, the high priest, though he was under special obligations to Jonathan for his elevation to the office of procurator; and to accomplish this end, he employed the aid of the Jewish robbers themselves. His only reason for thus treating the high priest was, that the high priest frequently ventured to give him advice about managing Jewish affairs. It is the testimony of Josephus, the Jewish historian, and of Tacitus, the Roman, that Felix acted on many occasions with injustice and cruelty. And at length, when Felix returned to Rome, at the close of his administration in Judea, "the principal of the Jewish inhabitants of Cesarea," says Josephus, "went up to Rome to accuse him; and he would certainly have been brought to punishment, unless Nero [the Roman emperor] had yielded to the importunate solicitations of Pallas, Felix's brother, who was at that time" a great favorite with Nero.

3. *We accept it always, and in all places*; not only in thy presence, and on public occasions, do we make such an acknowledgment, but every where and always. As much as to say, It is no flattery which we are now expressing, but the sober truth, which we are happy to have an opportunity of acknowledging.

5. Tertullus proceeded to bring

5 For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes :

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple : whom we took, and would have judged according to our law :

7 But the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great

forward the points of accusation against Paul. He accused him, in behalf of the Jews, first, of being a dangerous member of society, creating tumults and exciting sedition among the Jews ; secondly, of being a leader among the Christians ; and thirdly, of endeavoring to profane the Jewish temple. — *We have found this man a pestilent fellow* ; literally, *a pest* ; a dangerous man, spreading discontent and disaffection throughout the body of the Jews. || *A mover of sedition, &c.* ; exciting the Jews to tumults and to rebellion against the government. || *Throughout the world.* Paul had been extensively traversing the Roman empire ; and though Felix had no jurisdiction out of Judea, yet Tertullus wished to make out a strong case, and to prejudice him as much as possible against Paul. || *The sect of the Nazarenes.* Compare 23 : 22. The followers of Christ were thus opprobriously termed. The town of Nazareth, where Jesus was brought up (Luke 4 : 16), was held in low estimation among the Jews. See John 1 : 46. The term *Nazarene* appeared to them very justly applicable to Jesus, particularly as associating his name with a despised place. See Matt. 2 : 23. The same term came to be applied reproachfully to his followers.

6. *Who hath also gone about to profane the temple* ; who hath endeavored to profane the temple. See 21 : 28, 29. || *Whom we took, &c.* See 21 : 27. || *Whom we would have judged, &c.* So far from wishing to have him fairly judged, the narrative plainly shows that they were ready

violence took *him* away out of our hands,

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee : by examining of whom, thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

9 And the Jews also assented, saying, That these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him

to put him to death in the midst of the tumult. See 21 : 30, 31.

7. *The chief captain Lysias, &c.* See 21 : 31—33.

10. *Then Paul — answered.* No one can fail to notice the difference of Paul's manner of addressing Felix, from that of Tertullus. The Roman advocate commenced in a pompous strain of flattery, and showed throughout the prevalence of ill-will against the prisoner. Paul commenced in a sober and dignified strain, like a man conscious of innocence and of the integrity of his cause. Without provoking the hostility of Felix by referring to his acts of cruelty and injustice, and without using a word of flattery, he acknowledged him as a ruler well acquainted with the character of the Jews, and able to form a correct judgment respecting the matter which was now before him. He then proceeded to reply to the various charges which had been laid against him by Tertullus ; all which he declared and showed to be utterly false, with the exception of his belonging to the sect of the Nazarenes. This he acknowledged to be a true charge ; but so far from this being a just ground of offence against him, he affirmed that the preservation of a clear conscience required him to be a Christian, and that, in being a Christian, he by no means rejected the religion of Moses ; that, on the contrary, he adhered to the God of the nation's forefathers, still believing the writings of Moses and the prophets. In embracing the Christian religion, he had only come to the point to which Moses and the prophets were all

to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city :

directing their followers. Instead, therefore, of dishonoring the Jewish sacred writings, it was in conformity to them that he had become a follower of Jesus. He then went on to state the case of his apprehension by the Jews as it really occurred, and showed the groundlessness of their charges. — *Thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation.* The word *judge* is here used in that extensive sense in which it is elsewhere used in the Scriptures, as equivalent to *magistrate*, or *ruler*. The Roman procurators of the provinces were also the chief judicial authority. Felix had now been procurator five or six years. He had, also, before being elevated to this station, held a subordinate office in the country. He had had opportunity, therefore, of becoming intimately acquainted with the character and customs of the Jews.

11. *There are but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.* See 20:16. Paul was intending to be in Jerusalem during the Pentecost. Those who went up to Jerusalem at the time of the festivals were said to go up to worship, as those festivals were religious seasons. Paul could, no doubt, with a good conscience, join in some of the services of such an occasion.

12. *They neither found me in the temple disputing with any man; either on religious, or on civil affairs.* || *Neither in the synagogues;* the synagogues of Jerusalem. — Paul thus,

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets :

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

in the language of this verse, expressly denies the charge of exciting commotion and sedition among the people. The mention of so short a time as twelve days from the time of his arriving in Jerusalem to the time, probably, of his leaving it for Cesarea, and the entire absence of all seditious conduct, showed how groundless was such a charge.

14. *This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I, &c.* The word here rendered *heresy* would have been better rendered *a sect*; and then the connection between the points of accusation and the apostle's defence, would have been more evident. For here he alludes to the charge of his being a ringleader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes; and the word here translated *heresy* is precisely the same as, in the fifth verse, is properly translated *sect*. See, also, 23:22. That the charge of his belonging to the *sect of the Nazarenes* was true, he promptly acknowledges. || *The God of my fathers;* of my forefathers, extending back to Abraham. I worship the same God as the fathers of our nation worshipped, and have by no means renounced my connection with them, but most firmly hold to all things which are written in the law of Moses and in the books of the prophets.

15. *And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, &c.;* which they themselves also receive as an article of their religious belief. Thus, though Paul belonged to what

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

17 Now, after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multi-

they called *a sect*, yet he maintained, as well as they, the authority of their sacred books, worshipping the God of the nation, and cherishing the favorite hope of a resurrection from the dead.

16. *And herein*; that is, in this course of conduct; in my being a Christian, a member of the sect of the Nazarenes. || *I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence, &c.*; I am endeavoring, or striving, to have a clear conscience. In my being a Christian, I am following the dictates of conscience, laboring to have my conscience free from blame towards God and towards men.—Thus Paul replied to the charges laid against him. He declared that they were all false, and, incapable of being proved, with the exception of one; and in regard to that, though he belonged to the sect of the Nazarenes, or was a Christian, yet he was still a worshipper of the nation's God, and held to the nation's sacred writings, and cherished the hope of a resurrection, like other Jews. He was obeying his conscience, seeking to be free from guilt in respect both to God and to man. Indeed, he maintained that, by being a Christian, he was only following out the instructions of the Old Testament; it was in obedience to that book, that he was a member of the sect of the Nazarenes.

17. The apostle next proceeded to state the case of his apprehension by the Jews, as it really occurred; so that the procurator might have full knowledge of the affair. And in so doing, he replies to the charge of having attempted to profane the temple.

tude, nor with tumult:

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evildoing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried, standing among

Now after many years; of absence from Jerusalem. || *I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.* The apostle had been intrusted with contributions for the relief of distressed Jewish Christians. It was with special reference to such Jews in Judea, that he had been intrusted with the bounty of Christians in various provinces where he had travelled; and the circumstance of his having such a commission, was probably one of the reasons which made him so resolute in going up to Jerusalem, when he was repeatedly warned of the danger which awaited him. See 21: 10—14. As it was for a benevolent and pious purpose that he went up to Jerusalem, it was very improbable, perhaps he would suggest, that he would seek to profane the temple.

18. *Certain Jews from Asia.* See 21: 27. || *Found me purified in the temple*; found me going through the ceremonies of purification.

20. *While I stood before the council*; before the sanhedrim, when convened at the suggestion of Lysias for the examination of Paul. See 22: 30.

21. *Except it be for this one voice, &c.* See 23: 6. The apostle does not intimate that he had done wrong before the council; but, if he had done *any* wrong, it was merely in that circumstance to which he here alludes; and the greatness of that wrong Felix could easily judge of. Paul evidently used here the language of irony. His accusers would remember that circumstance with regret and mortification, as it proved the occasion of a very favorable testimony in his behalf, as well as of the sanhedrim's meeting being dissolved,

them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that way*, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

23 And he commanded a centu-

and of his being more effectually placed beyond their power, and transferred to another tribunal. Compare 23: 10.

22. *Felix — having more perfect knowledge of that way*; having gained, by Paul's answer to the charges, more information respecting the Christian religion, the sentiments and practices of the followers of Jesus, on which the accusation against Paul was grounded. || *He deferred them, &c.*; he put off the matter in respect to both parties. He probably saw reason to believe that the opinion of the chief captain, as expressed in his letter (23: 29), was correct: namely, that Paul was deserving neither of death nor of bonds. He might, however, reasonably wish, as a magistrate, to obtain further information; and as Lysias was personally acquainted with some of the facts, and as his name had been mentioned by Paul's accusers in a somewhat unfavorable manner, Felix concluded to defer a decision in the case till Lysias should come to Cesarea. Very possibly, too, Felix wished not to offend the Jews by promptly releasing Paul, though no sufficient reason appeared for detaining him as a prisoner. In these circumstances, he thought it most prudent to defer the matter for the present. Had he been thoroughly disposed to comply with the dictates of impartial justice, he would, no doubt, have acquitted and released Paul. He would not have waited, in hope that money would have been offered him (v. 26) as an inducement to do his prisoner justice.

23. *And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have lib-*

erion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister, or come unto him.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of right-

erty. Paul was to be under the care of the centurion, but not to be so close a prisoner as he had been. Some alteration was made in regard to his chains; or, instead of being confined to a soldier in military custody, he was released from the chain, and permitted to be in what was called *free custody* (see on 22: 30), the centurion being responsible for his safe keeping. Yet that chains were still worn by him, at least occasionally, appears from 26: 29.

24. *When Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, &c.* As Drusilla was a Jewess, she would be interested in seeing Paul and hearing him speak of the Christian religion. The interview appears to have been a private one, either for the sake of obtaining a wholly unreserved communication from Paul, so as to guide to a decision in his case, or to gratify the curiosity, perhaps, of Drusilla rather than his own. Drusilla had become unlawfully the wife of Felix. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa the first (see 12: 23), and had been promised in marriage to Antiochus Epiphanes, a distinguished king, on condition of his embracing the Jewish religion. He afterwards refused to comply with this condition; and Drusilla was married to Azizus, king of the Emesenes. Felix, being subsequently in her company, was captivated with her beauty, and sought means to entice her from her husband, that he might marry her himself. He employed the agency of a Jewish sorcerer, named Simon, and succeeded in obtaining her.

25. *And as he reasoned of righteousness; of justice. || Of temperance.*

eousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of

Continence, or chastity, better expresses the idea of the original. || *Felix trembled.* He felt that the apostle's discussions were particularly applicable to himself. He had not been a just and impartial ruler; he was at that time living unlawfully with Drusilla; and he had special reason to fear the judgment to come. || *When I have a convenient season, &c.* We can hardly fail to REMARK, that religion is not a matter of convenience, but of immediate pressing duty. We must take time for it. Thousands tremble, like Felix, under a consciousness of guilt and in view of danger; but alas! like him, too, they defer the unwelcome subject, and find no convenient season.

It is interesting to notice here Paul's fidelity in unfolding the gospel before Felix and Drusilla. Though he was a prisoner, and though their favor might have been of signal advantage to him, yet he disdained to seek it by being unfaithful to their spiritual interests, and to the commission he had received from Christ. He would not conceal the truth, nor blunt its edge.

26. *He hoped also that money should have been given him, &c.* The mercenary spirit of Felix still bore sway, and he would gladly have accepted a bribe for Paul's release. He doubtless gave Paul sufficiently intelligible hints to this effect, either personally or by the medium of others, supposing that Paul could, if he would, easily persuade his friends to furnish him with the requisite money. But Paul was not to be thus dealt with. He committed his cause to God, and would adopt no illegal methods for his personal advantage.

Let the case of Felix show us how baleful is the influence of love of money. It was for money's sake that Felix sought interviews with Paul;

Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

and though he could not conveniently listen to the faithful preacher, who was exposing to him his guilt and danger, he could find convenient seasons to gratify his love of gain, and to tempt Paul to seek his liberty by unlawful means.

27. *After two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room, &c.* Porcius Festus was sent by the emperor Nero, to succeed Felix in the office of procurator. Felix detained Paul as a prisoner during the two years in which he continued in office, after Paul appeared before him in Cesarea. Either the chief captain, Lysias, had not come to Cesarea (v. 22), which, however, we can hardly believe, or Felix proved unfaithful to his duty. Desiring to ingratiate himself with the Jews, as he was retiring from the government, by gratifying their unkind feelings towards Paul, Felix left him a prisoner, to be disposed of by Festus, his successor.

It is worthy of observation, that the aim of Felix in leaving Paul as a prisoner was not gained. When he returned to Rome, the Jews sent messengers to the emperor with complaints against him. See note on the second verse. His endeavor to gain favor with the Jews at his retirement from office shows, too, his consciousness that he poorly deserved the complimentary language of Tertullus. v. 2. One of the ways in which Roman procurators, on retiring from their office, sought to please the people, was a general releasing of prisoners; but great as would be the favor of such an act to Paul and his numerous friends, and just as it would have been, Felix felt it more important to himself to let Paul remain a prisoner, and thus to gratify the chief men among the Jews. So strong a

CHAPTER XXV.

2 The Jews accuse Paul before Festus. 8 He answereth for himself, 11 and appealeth unto Cesar. 14 Afterwards Festus openeth his matter to king Agrippa, 23 and he is brought forth. 25 Festus cleareth him to have done nothing worthy of death.

NOW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem.

temptation to injustice, is love of popular favor; and yet so fruitless, often, is the pursuit of popularity.

It is interesting here to notice the patience of Paul. Desirable as was liberty to him, that he might go wherever he could find opportunity to make known the gospel, he is still detained as a prisoner. He was thus learning, in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content (Phil. 4: 11); and quietly to submit to arrangements which, so far as he was concerned, he might consider providential. His time, however, was not wasted. His detention from going abroad to preach the gospel was favorable for his writing to the churches, and in various ways promoting the cause of Christ. He could say, though he was in bonds, yet the *word of God* was not chained (2 Tim. 2: 9); and his very confinement could be overruled for the furtherance of the cause to which he was devoted. Phil. 1: 12.

CHAPTER XXV.

1. *When Festus was come into the province; the province of Judea, as its governor. || He ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem.* Cesarea was the principal residence of the procurator, or governor; but as Jerusalem was the chief city of the Jews, it was necessary for him to visit it frequently, and, especially, soon after entering on his administration. It was a mark of respect, also, to the Jews for him to visit their chief city, as well as a gratification of his curiosity, and an occasion of forming acquaintance with the principal men of the nation.

26 *

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*.

2. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews, &c. Length of time had not diminished the hostility of the high priest and chief men against Paul. They were forward, also, in endeavoring to make an unfavorable impression concerning him on the new governor's mind, and to forestall any information that might be given him from Paul or his friends. It would seem, too, from the 15th and 16th verses, that, at the outset, they sought from Festus a decision against him which would secure his death.

3. That he would send for him to Jerusalem. They endeavored to prevail on Festus to have him brought back at once to Jerusalem, pretending that his case ought to come before the Jewish sanhedrim, or seeking this as a special favor to them. || *Laying wait—to kill him;* employing suitable persons to waylay and kill him. As they had no justice on their side against him, they still persisted in endeavoring to compass his death by any possible means. And yet these men were occupying religious offices in the nation. How blind does prejudice make men! and how deeply deceived may they become in regard to their own true character!

4. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, &c. Festus refused to act in accordance with their request. He was not yet sufficiently acquainted with the case to feel justified in delivering Paul up to the Jews; nor would his business allow him to remain long in Jerusalem. He therefore determined, that Paul should continue in Cesarea,

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea ; and the next day sitting on the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the

expecting himself soon to return thither, and promising that the case should receive prompt attention.

5. *Let them — which among you are able, go down with me* ; more properly, Let the men of note and power among you, let your chief men, go with me. || *If there be any wickedness in him* ; if he have been guilty of any crime, and the charges on which he has been made a prisoner, have any truth in them.

6. *When he had tarried among them more than ten days.* Some critical editions of the Greek Testament convey here a different idea, and give the meaning, *about eight or ten days, or, not more than eight or ten days.* This agrees best with the remark of Festus, that he should shortly set out for Cesarea. || *The next day* ; the next after his arrival in Cesarea. Festus entered promptly on the examination of the case.

7. *When he was come* ; when Paul came to the tribunal, or judgment-seat, of Festus.

8. *He answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, &c.* The several points of accusation which the Jews had laid against him, Paul kept distinctly in view, that the procurator might know the real grounds on which the charge rested. These were three : first, opposition to the law of Moses ; secondly, profanation of the temple ; thirdly, attempts to excite sedition against the Roman emperor. Compare 21: 28. 24: 5, 6. These charges Paul unequivocally pronounced to be false, and incapable of proof ; so that his adversaries had

Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove ;

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cesar have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul,

no just cause of complaint against him. Doubtless, Paul entered at some length into the case, and made all requisite explanations. The points only in regard to which he spoke, are here enumerated by the sacred historian, as a kind of abstract of Paul's defence.

9. *Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, &c.* Desire to please the Jews, alas ! again prevailed over the dictates of a better judgment. Compare 24: 27. Festus, doubtless, saw the nature of the case, and was able to trace the whole matter to the Jews' ill-will against Paul. But he had recently entered on his office ; and he judged it prudent to avoid incurring the displeasure of the chief men of the province. Instead, therefore, of pronouncing Paul innocent, and releasing him, as in all justice he ought to have done (for the charges against him were not substantiated, and abundant time had elapsed, since Paul's apprehension, for the Jews to prove their charges, if capable of proof), he proposed to him to go up to Jerusalem, and to have his cause there tried. Of course, if he should go back to Jerusalem, it would be for the purpose of being tried by the *sanhedrim*. Festus, however, was to be present as the judge ; for cases such as this was represented by the Jews to be, involving the life of the prisoner, could not result in the prisoner's death, without the consent of the Roman governor. The proposal was a most unworthy one ; for Festus had ample power to decide the case, and ample information could be pro-

and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews

cured in Cesarea, even if what was already possessed were not enough. Even to allow Paul to be conveyed back to Jerusalem for trial, would be an unmanly tampering with the case, and a sure exposing of him to the malicious attempts of the Jews. This Paul well understood; and he met the proposal of Festus with his characteristic decision, and with that collected firmness which results from the consciousness of integrity. Besides, he had long been desirous of going to Rome (19: 21), there to preach the gospel; and if he could not go otherwise than as a prisoner, to be tried before the highest tribunal, he would go in that manner, rather than, by going to Jerusalem, incur the risk of never preaching at Rome; for to go to Jerusalem would be presumptuously to expose his life. Festus saw that he could not bring the matter to a conclusion in a just way, without offending the Jews; and he would be willing, probably, that Paul should go back to Jerusalem, in the hope that if the case should be tried in that city, some circumstances would arise by which it would be terminated; and even if it were terminated in a way that should be unjust to an innocent man, or even if Paul should be secretly put to death by his enemies, at any rate the governor would thus get rid of a troublesome case. From 28: 18, 19, it would seem that this proposal by Festus was either suggested by the Jews themselves, or was occasioned by their most evident unwillingness that Festus should do what he appeared to them inclined to do; namely, to acquit and to release Paul.

10. *I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged.* The case was already before the very tribunal where it ought to be tried;

have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things

namely, Cesar's tribunal, that is, the Roman tribunal; for the crime of sedition had been alleged against him. Festus was the emperor's representative for the province of Judea, and had all requisite power to judge in the case. || *To the Jews have I done no wrong, &c.* Paul was innocent as to all the charges which had been laid against him; and all the circumstances of the case were sufficiently known to Festus. By the governor's own knowledge of the case, and convictions in regard to it, Paul would willingly abide. These were altogether in his favor. Festus knew him to be an injured man.

Paul's manner of speaking to Festus, in the presence, too, of such a company as was then assembled, may seem not sufficiently respectful, when we regard one as a prisoner, and the other as the chief magistrate of the province. But we must remember how long the case had been held in suspense; how utterly destitute of evidence were the charges of the Jews; how clearly Festus must have seen the nature of the case and the innocence of Paul. We must also consider the difference between the forms of trial at that time and the present. There was less formality; and as there was no jury to whom the case was to be referred, but it was presented directly to Festus for examination and decision, a personal course of remark in regard to his knowledge of the case was exactly appropriate.

11. *But if there be none of these things, &c.*; if none of these things, of which they accuse me, are true; if there be nothing in them. || *No man may deliver me unto them.* Festus had proposed to Paul that he should go up to Jerusalem, and be there tried *before him.* v. 9. But, after all, this proposal amounted to a

whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cesar.

12 Then Festus, when he had

delivering of Paul to the power of the Jews; for their ability to prevent justice would be vastly increased, if they could have him brought before the sanhedrim, and under the full weight of the popular fury which the high priest and the chief men would excite, and which they could manage according to their own will. Festus, too, himself, could be more easily overawed by the Jews, if the case should be tried in Jerusalem. Not to say, that in all probability he never would arrive at Jerusalem, as at various stages of the journey, men could be stationed to waylay and murder him. This Paul could not but strongly suspect, even if Festus did not; and this was actually a part of the Jews' plan, when they endeavored to prevail on Festus, during his visit in Jerusalem, to have Paul sent up thither from Cesarea. See v. 3. Compare 23 : 12—15. || *I appeal unto Cesar*; that is, to the emperor himself; as if he had said, If the Roman governor of this province will not decide the case, and rather chooses to send me back to Jerusalem, I decline going to Jerusalem, and claim my right of appeal to the emperor himself. I choose to go to Rome, and there have the matter settled. As Paul's case was already before a Roman tribunal, the procurator had no power to *require* him to go to Jerusalem and appear before the sanhedrim; the proper course was, for the procurator to decide the case, or else for it to go up to a higher Roman tribunal, such as would be found in the imperial city itself. If Paul had chosen, however, to take it out of the Roman court, and repair to Jerusalem, as his accusers, of course, would have been glad for him to do, he might have done so. But in such an event, the responsibility of the result would have lain with himself, since he could not be compelled to take such a course. The only course of safety

conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? unto Cesar shalt thou go.

13 And after certain days, king

was, to refer the matter to a higher tribunal; and though the emperor Nero was far from being distinguished by justice, yet Paul would have a far better prospect of justice being shown him, than if he should appear before a court of the Jews.

12. *When he had conferred with the council*; with his body of counsellors. || *Unto Cesar shalt thou go*. Thou shalt go, according to thy choice. The choice was not between having a decision by Festus, according to the knowledge which he had acquired of the case (v. 10), and having the case carried up to Cesar; but it was between going back to Jerusalem for trial,—thus placing himself in most unfavorable circumstances,—and going to Rome to have the case transferred to the imperial tribunal. For it had become very evident, that the Roman governor would not bring the case to a settlement. Festus, doubtless, seized with avidity upon Paul's preference to appear before the emperor; for, by such an appeal, the case was removed from the care of Festus, and he thus became disentangled from a vexatious matter, in which he could not decide according to his own sense of justice without incurring the ill-will of the Jews. With pleasure, therefore, he assented to Paul's conclusion.—The word *Cesar*, in this verse, is equivalent to *the emperor*. It was applied to the Roman emperors in common; and the reigning emperor at this time was Nero. He afterwards became a notorious persecutor of the Christians, but had not yet distinguished himself as their enemy. Paul had the fullest confidence that it was safer to appeal to him, than to transfer the case to a Jewish court.

13. *King Agrippa*. This man was Herod Agrippa the Second, or the younger; a son of the Herod who is mentioned, in the twelfth chapter of the Acts, as having died so miserable

Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea, to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring *to have judgment against him.*

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to

a death at Cesarea. He was a great-grandson of Herod the Great, and was the last person who bore the title of king of the Jews. At the time of his father's death, he was at Rome in the emperor's family, where he had been educated, and was seventeen years of age. The emperor Claudius was unwilling to bestow on so young a person the dominions which Agrippa the First had governed, and therefore sent a Roman procurator, Cuspius Fadus, to govern Judea, and appointed young Agrippa to the tetrarchy of Chalcis, which had become vacant by the death of Agrippa's uncle. Four years afterwards, Claudius transferred him from the government of Chalcis to that of the northern districts of Palestine; namely, Batanea, Auranitis, Trachonitis, and Abilene. He was appointed tetrarch of the region to which these districts belonged, bearing, however, the title of king. || *Bernice.* She was sister of king Agrippa, who is here mentioned. She was first married to her uncle, who was then king of Chalcis; and, after his death, was married to Polemon, king of Cilicia, who subsequently embraced the Jewish religion. This marriage was of short duration; for Bernice deserted her husband, and went to live with her brother Agrippa. || *Come to Cesarea, to salute Festus;* to pay him their respects, and to congratulate him on his recent accession to the honors of government, as procurator of Judea.

deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth;

18 Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

14. *Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king.* As Agrippa was a Jew, and well acquainted with Jewish customs and principles, it was natural that Festus should make known to him Paul's case. Agrippa had obtained, too, by inheritance from his uncle, the former king of Chalcis, a degree of authority in regard to the care of the Jewish temple, and a voice in appointments to the high priesthood. As one of the accusations against Paul was, that he had sought to profane the temple, king Agrippa was a suitable person to consult in this matter, although Paul's case was now in such an attitude that no relief could be expected by him, before appearing in the emperor's presence at Rome. Yet curiosity would prompt Festus to obtain Agrippa's opinion in regard to the subject. || *There is a certain man left in bonds, &c.* Compare 24: 27.

15. *About whom — the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me.* Compare the second and third verses of this chapter.

16. *It is not the manner of the Romans, &c.* The Jews were at that time in civil subjection to the Romans; and consequently the Roman method of treating an accused person, particularly in cases affecting life, must be followed. || *Have license to answer for himself;* have permission to defend himself against his accusers.

18. *They brought none accusation of such things as I supposed.* Festus

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of

naturally supposed that some offence against the laws of the land would be charged against the prisoner; but no specific crime of that nature was alleged.

19. *But had certain questions against him of their own superstition; or, rather, of their own religion; for so the original word may often be rendered.* As Festus was conversing with a Jew, a man, too, of high authority, and who had come to pay respect to him, it scarcely admits a doubt that he used the word with a good meaning, not designing to cast reproach on the chief men of the nation who had appeared against Paul. Festus meant to convey the idea that the grounds of accusation were religious ones, and those not of a very grave character, and such as did not properly pertain to him in his capacity of a civil magistrate. This was true respecting all the charges, except that of raising sedition; but this charge was seen by Festus to be a subordinate one, and if the others had not been made, this would not have been thought of. || *Of one Jesus, &c.* Festus was a Roman, to whom the name and actions of the Lord Jesus were but little known. He spoke, therefore, in a style which indicated that to him Jesus was an indifferent person, and the question, whether Jesus was dead or alive, was one of no serious importance. But in truth, and in the judgment of Paul, this was a question of vital consequence; for if Jesus were not risen from the dead, he was not the Messiah. The resurrection of Jesus,

Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men

consequently, was a cardinal point in the apostle's doctrine. It was not, however, a matter that could properly come before Festus, as a civil magistrate.

20. *I doubted of such manner of questions; I doubted whether such questions ought to come before my tribunal. || I asked him, &c.* The governor made as smooth a representation as possible of the course he had pursued. The motive which he here mentions as influencing him, might have had some connection with his proposal to Paul to go back to Jerusalem for trial. But the chief motive we find stated in the ninth verse—his desire to gain favor with the Jews.

21. *Augustus.* Augustus is here not a proper name, but a title which was used by the Roman emperors. It was first assumed by Octavius, and afterwards descended to all the emperors. It corresponds to our word *venerable*, or *august*. The emperor at this time was Nero, as has already been stated; but the title, or official epithet, which was appropriated to the reigning emperor, would, to a contemporary, distinguish him as really as the word *emperor* does to us. || *Cesar.* This word is here, as in the eleventh verse, another term for *the emperor*.

22. *I would also hear, &c.; I should be glad to hear him myself.*

23. *With great pomp; with much parade and display, as to their dress and their retinue, or attendants. || The place of hearing; the hall where public trials were held.*

of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

25. *Augustus.* See on v. 21.

26. *To write unto my lord;* to my sovereign, to the emperor. Festus, by using this term, acknowledged his allegiance to the emperor. The condition in which Festus found himself was a singular one. He was about sending a prisoner to the emperor, and yet was not able to specify against him any charge of guilt. || *Wherefore, &c.* The appearance of Paul before Agrippa had not for its object a new hearing of the case, so as to have a new decision; but, as Festus here says, to enable him to state definitely in his communication to the emperor the charges which were laid against him. To his being able to do this, the presence of Agrippa, and a hearing of the case by him, might materially contribute. We shall probably not greatly err, if we regard the chief purpose of Festus as being to gratify his royal visitors, Agrippa and Bernice. || *After examination had;* after an examination of the case being held.

CHAPTER XXVI.

2 Paul, in the presence of Agrippa, declarereth his life from his childhood, 12 and how miraculously he was converted, and called to his apostleship. 24 Festus chargeth him to be mad, whereunto he answereth modestly. 28 Agrippa is almost persuaded to be a Christian. 31 The whole company pronounce him innocent.

THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, *Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.* Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 *I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:*

3 *Especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.*

4 *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first*

CHAPTER XXVI.

1. *Paul stretched forth the hand.* Such was the practice among the ancients, at the commencement of a public address. || *Answered for himself;* spoke in his own defence.

3. *I know thee to be expert in all customs, &c.*; well acquainted with the customs and the disputes which exist among the Jews. Agrippa was himself a Jew, and was truly represented by Paul as having adequate knowledge of Jewish manners and opinions. His early education in Jerusalem, in the family of his father, Agrippa the First, who was a bigoted Jew; his connection with the sacred treasure, and with the government of the temple; and his having a voice in nominations to the priesthood,—must have made him intimately acquainted with Jewish affairs. Paul's opening remarks were adapted to gain the good-will of Agrippa; but he by no means transcended the limits of truth.

among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews,

5 Which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify,) that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers :

5. *After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.* There were several sects among the Jews; but, of these, the Pharisees professed the most punctilious regard to the law of Moses, particularly as to its ceremonial injunctions. Compare Matt. 5: 20. 23: 23. See also Phil. 3: 4—6.

6. *I — am judged for the hope of the promise, &c.;* that is, the promise respecting the Messiah's coming. To the patriarchs of the nation this promise had been made; and all the Jews professed a confidence in its fulfilment. Now, it was in consequence of the hope which this promise had excited, that Paul had been seized and brought to trial, inasmuch as, in accordance with the promise, he was a believer in Jesus as the Messiah. He had been brought before the courts because he was a Christian, maintaining that the promise of a Messiah had been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, and that on Jesus the faith and hopes of the nation ought to be placed.

7. *Unto which promise;* to the fulfilment of which promise. || *Our twelve tribes;* the Jewish nation. There were originally twelve tribes of the Hebrews. After the death of king Solomon, ten withdrew, and formed the Israelitish kingdom. Both kingdoms, Israel and Judah, were subsequently carried into captivity; and the real distinction into twelve tribes was very much impaired. Nor could it be strictly said to exist, after the return of the people of Judah from the Babylonian captivity. The term, however, was still preserved; and the Jews seem to have taken a

7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which *hope's* sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

pleasure in keeping the name, at least, of their original condition. See, also, James 1: 1. || *Instantly serving God;* assiduously performing the sacred services which God had appointed through Moses. || *For which hope's sake — I am accused of the Jews.* The hope of the nation respecting the Messiah, had really been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Paul was a devoted follower of Jesus as the Messiah; and it was for his zeal in the cause of Jesus, that the Jews pursued him with their ill-will.

8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, &c.* The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the crowning proof that he was the Messiah. On this event the apostle perpetually insisted, as the appropriate and the entirely satisfactory evidence in favor of Jesus. To this he alludes in this verse; as if he had said, It has been the prevalent belief of the nation that the dead are to be raised up. Now, why should you act as if you disbelieved this point of doctrine, when it comes to be applied to Jesus of Nazareth? We — the apostle may be considered as saying — we affirm, and can show uncontestedly, that he did arise from the dead; and if he really did arise, then he must be the Messiah, because he himself predicted that he should arise, and he spoke beforehand of this event as a chief proof of his being the Messiah; and because, by his resurrection, the prophecies of the Old Testament pertaining to the Messiah are fulfilled. Not to admit, then, the Messiahship of Jesus, in view of these facts, amounted to a disbelief of the doctrine that

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in

God was to raise up the dead. Making this, therefore, the starting point in his argument, Paul proceeded to show the grounds of his belief that Jesus had been raised up from the dead, and that he was, consequently, the Messiah. And thus Paul made it evident that it was for his belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and his full confidence in the promise originally made to the patriarchs, that the Jews were now persecuting him. — A slightly different mode of punctuation, in the original, is preferred by some editors, as more readily presenting the apostle's idea. According to that suggestion, the verse might be thus translated: "What! is it judged an incredible thing with you, that God should raise up dead persons?" If it be not incredible, then it may be true that Jesus has been raised up; and if this be true, then is he the Messiah. The apostle then proceeds to relate the remarkable appearance of Jesus to him while on his way to Damascus. This appearance of Jesus was a decisive proof that he had been raised up from the dead, and consequently that the persecution, with which Paul had been followed, was wholly wrong. It was, also, a principal event in respect to Paul's being commissioned, as an apostle, to maintain the cause of Jesus.

9. *I verily thought — that I ought to do many things contrary, &c.* While under the influence of Jewish prejudice, Paul really thought it his duty to aim at destroying the religion of Jesus. In making this remark, he would intimate that *he* once felt, in respect to Jesus, as the Jews felt who were now so active in opposing him. But he had seen his error, and could give most convincing reasons for abandoning it, and espousing the cause of Jesus. It was from a blind religious zeal, that he had been led to

Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

persecute the Christians. He would also, perhaps, intimate that, however much he regretted the opposition in which the Jews were indulging against the cause of Jesus, he was willing to impute it, in great part, to ignorance respecting the real character of Jesus; and to believe that, could they see as clearly as he had seen, the evidence of his being the Messiah, they might even, like him, embrace the cause they were now seeking to destroy.

Let us not fail to **NOTICE**, that sincerity is not a test of truth; nor does it prove us accepted of God. We may be sincerely wrong, as well as sincerely right. Our aim ought to be to learn the real will of God, and to be conformed to that.

10. *Which thing I also did in Jerusalem.* Compare 8:3. 22:4. || *Many of the saints, &c.* No mention is made, in the early part of this book, of any persons being put to death, besides Stephen, before Paul's conversion; but the language here shows, that Stephen's was not a solitary instance. His was the most remarkable, and probably the first, instance, and was therefore related with particularity. But many others, also, endured the weight of the deadly opposition to the gospel, which was so conspicuously manifested in the case of Stephen. || *I gave my voice against them;* I expressed my full approval of the deed. It does not appear that Paul was at that time a member of any judicial, or executive, body, so as to be entitled to a vote; but he assented to the murderous deeds of those who were in power, and by guarding the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, as well as in other ways, he aided and abetted the cause of persecution.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

12 Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

11. *I punished them oft in every synagogue.* See on 22:19. Compare Matt. 10:17. || *And compelled them to blaspheme;* that is, to revile the name of Jesus. Not content with forcing Christians to renounce their new religion, he drove them to the extremity of heaping reproach and insult on the name of Jesus. || *I persecuted them even unto strange cities;* I persecuted them with such unrelenting severity, that they betook themselves to foreign cities; and thither, too, I followed them, with the same design of persecuting them, and of exterminating the religion of Jesus. Compare 9:2.

12. *Whereupon;* for which purpose.

12—15. Compare 9:1—6.

16—18. Paul combines into one view, in these verses, what was communicated to him by Jesus personally, and what was afterwards communicated to him by Ananias, to whom, also, the Lord appeared, and made known his purposes respecting Paul. Compare 9:15, 16. Paul wished, in this address before Agrippa, to be brief, and yet comprehensive; and, as is frequently done in narrations, he joined together various matters pertaining to the subject in hand,

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

without minutely specifying the time when they occurred, or the manner in which divine communications were made to him.

17. *Delivering thee from the people;* from the Jews, as distinguished from the Gentiles, who are immediately mentioned.

18. *To open their eyes;* to teach them, and to teach with such accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit, that they shall discern and receive the truth. || *To turn them from darkness to light;* from ignorance and sin to knowledge and piety. || *From the power of Satan unto God.* Satan is called the prince of this world (John 14:30), who rules in the hearts of those who disobey Christ. Eph. 2:2. To Satan's influence are traced, in the Scriptures, the erroneous views and the sinful practices of men. To be turned, then, from the dominion of Satan unto God, is to be released from the power of error and sin, and to become children of God, living in obedience to him and enjoying his favor. || *That they may receive forgiveness of sins, &c.* Forgiveness of sins is bestowed on men, when they receive the gospel, and, by repentance and belief in Christ, turn from a sinful to a righteous course of life. 2:38.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and

3: 19. 5: 31. The course of righteousness, on which the true followers of Christ enter, issues in their admission to heavenly bliss among the redeemed. || *Among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* By faith in Christ, or by being his disciples, men become sanctified, or holy; for faith in Christ produces holy obedience. Where there is true faith, holiness of heart and life will be the result.—The apostle may, also, be understood as conveying the idea, not simply that men are sanctified by faith, but that by faith in him, or becoming his followers, men receive pardon and the blessings of the redeemed. This larger view of the passage is more distinctly expressed by a transposition of the clauses, that may without impropriety be adopted; in conformity to which, we should thus read — “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that by faith which is in me [by becoming believers in me] they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them who are sanctified.”

19. *I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision;* to the vision which appeared to me from heaven, communicating to me the will of God.

20. *But showed first unto them of Damascus.* Compare 9: 19, 20. || *And at Jerusalem.* Compare 9: 23, 29. || *That they should — do works meet for repentance;* should enter on a course of life meet for, or becoming in, those who profess penitence for sin and a holy amendment of life.

21. *For these causes;* for my dili-

went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

gent prosecution of the duties to which the Lord had so evidently called me, as a minister of the gospel. || *The Jews caught me in the temple.* See 21: 27. Whatever the Jews might pretend, as the cause of their hostility to Paul, it was his activity and zeal as a Christian preacher, and the success with which his labors were crowned, that excited their deadly hatred.

22. *Witnessing both to small and great;* to young and old, to all men whom I can find opportunity to address. || *Saying none other things than those which Moses, &c.* Paul steadily maintained that, in becoming a Christian, he had not rejected Moses; but that it was in entire conformity to the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, that he was a follower of Jesus. For the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah, were fulfilled in Jesus; and the religion of Jesus was the very system to which the Old Testament pointed.

23. *That Christ should suffer;* that the Messiah should suffer death. This the Old Testament taught (Is. 53: 6—9); though the Jews had overlooked this truth, in consequence of their contemplating the Messiah almost exclusively as a glorious and conquering Prince. || *That he should be the first that should rise from the dead.* See Ps. 16: 10, as explained in Acts 2: 31. 13: 35—37. Compare Luke 24: 46. Others had been raised up from the dead before the Lord Jesus; as the young man of Nain (Luke 7: 11—15), and Lazarus. John,

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I

speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

11th chapter. But *he* was the first who arose from the dead to a deathless life. He was the first who arose in such a manner, and with such results, as to give indubitable evidence of a future immortal life, and as the leader and prince of those who should arise to a glorious state. It is in this sense, that Jesus, after rising from the dead, is called "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23); "the first-born from the dead" (Col. 1: 18); and "the first begotten of the dead"; Rev. 1: 5. || *And should show light, &c.; should give the knowledge and enjoyment of true religion both to Jews and to Gentiles.*

24. *Festus said—thou art beside thyself.* So different were the ideas which Paul had expressed, from the religious notions of Festus, who was a Roman; and so intent upon his subject did Paul appear, that Festus considered him as quite extravagant. || *Much learning, &c.; much reading and study have deranged you.* Paul had referred to Moses and the prophets; and he had, probably, been noticed by Festus as fond of reading and meditation. Without meaning to call him *disordered in his intellect*, Festus meant to convey the idea that he was beside himself in regard to the subject of religion; that that subject had so engrossed his attention, as to carry him beyond all just bounds.

25. *I—speak forth the words of truth and soberness;* what I have said is the sober truth; it can all be well substantiated.

26. *For the king knoweth of these things;* namely, the death of Jesus, and his resurrection, the predictions of the prophets concerning the Mes-

siah as the dispenser of religion and happiness to the nations, and the preaching of the gospel among both Jews and Gentiles. These things were known to king Agrippa. His Jewish education, and his residence in Palestine, would make the apostle feel that nothing was hazarded in making this affirmation concerning Agrippa. || *For this thing was not done in a corner.* The death of Jesus, and the series of events which followed, had not occurred in secret. The whole course of events took place publicly, and was well known.

27. *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? &c.* The remark of Festus in the twenty-fourth verse, turned Paul out of the course of thought which he was pursuing. Had he not been interrupted, he would probably have made some reference to the prophets, and still further vindicated the religion of Jesus. But the interruption demanded from him a distinct and earnest avowal of the real truth of what he had been declaring, and even an appeal to king Agrippa himself in regard to the facts on which he had been enlarging. He, therefore, appealed directly to the king, as to one, who, like himself, believed in the Old Testament. He would thus show that his remarks about Moses and the prophets did not proceed from a disordered imagination.

28. *Almost thou persuadest me, &c.* Agrippa tacitly acknowledged his belief in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and confessed that Paul's reasoning could not be gainsaid. He declared himself half persuaded to become a Christian. He saw the

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

truth of the apostle's statements, and felt to some extent the force of his arguments; and had his heart been right, he would have embraced the gospel. How often, alas! does the heart refuse to follow the convictions of the understanding! and how mournful to be *not quite a Christian!* Such a man will *not quite reach heaven.*—Whether, however, Agrippa was truly serious and earnest in this remark, is very questionable. When we consider the character and circumstances of Agrippa, a man who cared but little about religion, and who was fond of pleasure, yet of much mildness and good nature, the suggestion which is made by some writers will appear correct, that he used merely the language of politeness, and, as Bloomfield says, of that "complimentary insincerity, into which good-natured, easy, and unscrupulous persons are apt to run." As the term *Christian* was at that time, among the Jews, associated with contempt, it is probable that the language and the looks of the king conveyed the idea, that he thought it unworthy of him to be a Christian, though he could not but grant that Paul had made out a very fair case.

29. *I would to God, that not only thou, &c.*; it is my heart's desire, and I could entreat God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me, were entirely like myself, in being well-convinced and true-hearted Christians; yet not like me, in wearing a chain. He wished all to possess the Christian character, with the joys and hopes to which it entitles, but without the bonds which he was doomed to wear.—He cherished

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cesar.

none but the kindest feelings; and wished evil to no man.

30. *The king rose up, &c.* Probably the king hastened his departure, as he perceived Paul was disposed to apply to him the subject of religion in a more personal manner, than he was willing to endure.

31. *They talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds.* Every new examination rendered Paul's innocence more and more clear. It was only prejudice and ill-will, at first, that had prompted his apprehension; and it was the unjust desire, on the part of the Roman procurators, Felix and Festus, to gratify the Jews, that had so long kept him a prisoner.

32. *This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cesar.* How lamentable, then, a reader may think, that Paul had appealed to the emperor. But he was under a sort of necessity of so doing. Festus, when he saw that Paul was an innocent man, instead of discharging him from confinement, proposed to him (25: 9), out of partiality to the Jews, to go up to Jerusalem for a rehearing of his case. Rather than do this, and thus expose himself, without necessity, to certain death, and rather than remain in the power of a procurator who had shown so little sense of justice as to make the proposal, and from whom, therefore, he had no reason to hope for speedy justice, if any at all, he appealed to the emperor, and thus transferred himself from the procurator's tribunal to a supreme court, for final adjudication. As he had made this appeal, the judicial power of the proc-

CHAPTER XXVII.

1 Paul, shipping toward Rome, 10 foretelleth of the danger of the voyage, 11 but is not believed. 14 They are tossed to and fro with tempest, 41 and suffer shipwreck, 22, 34, 44 yet all come safe to land.

AND when it was determined, 1 that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

urator over him had ceased, and the cause rested with the emperor. Besides, according to an intimation from Paul in 28:19, the Jews took very decided ground against his being released by Festus. The governor's fears were doubtless addressed by the Jews, and he allowed himself to be drawn from the path of justice; so that Paul "was constrained to appeal unto Cesar."

CHAPTER XXVII.

1. *That we should sail into Italy.* Luke was now with Paul; not, however, as a prisoner, but as a friend and companion. Paul, having appealed to the emperor, was to be conveyed to Rome, the capital of Italy. || *A centurion of Augustus' band.* A cohort, bearing this name, had been on duty in Cesarea, to the commander of which Paul was delivered for safe conduct to Rome. The epithet which was applied to the emperor (25:21, 25), was also given to some of the Roman legions, and to some cohorts. A cohort was one of the companies, or bands, which composed a legion; as companies among us form a regiment.

2. *A ship of Adramyttium;* a vessel belonging to Adramyttium, a city in Mysia, one of the provinces of Asia Minor. || *We launched;* we set sail. || *Meaning to sail by the coast of Asia;* to sail along the coast. The vessel was a coasting vessel, laden with Syrian merchandise for sale in various ports along the coast of Asia Minor. Paul was put on board of this vessel, in the expectation that in

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cy-

some one of the ports at which it would touch, a vessel would be found sailing for Italy. || *Aristarchus—being with us;* the same, doubtless, as is mentioned in 19:20, 20:4, as one of Paul's companions. The presence of Luke and Aristarchus—such steadfast friends—must have been cheering to the apostle. Their attachment to him was strong. They gave him their countenance and aid, in evil report as well as in good report, in perils as well as prosperity.

3. *We touched at Sidon;* a city of Phenicia. See on 12:20. See, also, Luke 4:26. Matt. 11:21. Sidon was a very ancient city, mentioned in Gen. 10:19. It was destroyed by Artaxerxes Ochus, king of Persia, about three hundred and forty years before Christ. It was afterwards rebuilt, and was taken by Alexander the Great. After various fortunes, it fell, at length, into the power of the Romans. It now bears the name Saide, and is a considerable city. || *Julius courteously entreated Paul;* treated Paul with kindness. || *Gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself;* more literally, permitted him to go to his friends and enjoy their kind attentions.

The kind treatment which Paul received from the centurion was occasioned, doubtless, by his being known to be an innocent and worthy man. Festus had probably directed Julius to treat him with the utmost kindness, consistent with his being a prisoner.

4. *We sailed under Cyprus;* sailed under the lee of Cyprus, sheltered by

prus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city of Lycia.*

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone:

8 And hardly passing it, came

that island from the unfavorable winds. Cyprus was north-west of Sidon. See on 11:19.

5. *Cilicia — Pamphylia — Lycia;* provinces of Asia Minor.

6. *A ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy.* Alexandria was a distinguished city of Egypt, on the northern coast of Africa; built by Alexander the Great, and named in honor of himself. See on 6:9. 18:24. According to the expectation mentioned in the note on the second verse, an Alexandrian vessel was found in the port of Myra, bound directly to Italy. Paul and his company were, therefore, transferred to that vessel.

7. *Cnidus;* a town on a peninsula belonging to the province of Caria, lying between the islands Rhodes and Coos. || *We sailed under Crete.* They took a southerly direction, and sailed under the lee of the island of Crete, passing by the promontory, or cape, of *Salmone*, the eastern end of the island.—Crete, now called *Candia*, is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean sea, and lies north of Egypt. It was anciently much celebrated for its hundred cities. It was favorably situated for commerce, and its inhabitants were much occupied in navigation. Their moral character is told by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to Titus (1:12), quoting from Callimachus, one of their own poets—“The Cretians are always liars.” So eminently was this the case, that the word *to Cretanize* was sarcastically used as meaning to

unto a place which is called, The Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9 Now, when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless, the centurion

tell lies. A Christian church, however, was early established on this island, and would seem to have been considerably prospered. Titus 1:5. Candia, the ancient Crete, is now under the government of the Turks.

8. *Hardly passing it;* with difficulty sailing by Salmone. || *The Fair Havens — Lasea;* places on the island of Crete.

9. *Because the fast was now already past;* the annual fast-day of the Jews (Lev. 16:29, 30), which occurred in the Jewish month Tisri, corresponding to the latter part of our September and the former part of October. It is here mentioned as a designation of time, since the fast always occurred at a regular season. The season of the year thus designated was peculiarly liable to storms, and therefore “sailing was dangerous.” Philo, an ancient Jewish writer of Alexandria, in Egypt, remarks, that after the fast nobody thought of putting to sea.

10. *With hurt and much damage — also of our lives.* In all human probability, some lives would be lost out of so large a company; for the number on board was two hundred and seventy-six. See v. 37. Paul was, however, afterwards (v. 22) divinely assured that there would be no loss of life.

11. *The centurion believed the master, &c.* The centurion very naturally presumed that the sailing-master, or pilot, and the owner, were more acquainted with navigation than Paul

believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; *which is* a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loos-

was, and hence confided more in their judgment. Paul's advice seems to have been, that the vessel should remain where she was. Compare v. 21. But his advice was overruled by the opinion of the pilot and owner, and the advice of the majority.

12. *The haven was not commodious, &c.* The vessel was now at the place called *The Fair Havens* (v. 8); but the harbor here was not a suitable one for spending the winter in with safety. || *They might attain to Phenice;* they might reach *Phœnix*, as the word is better rendered, a city on the south-west part of Crete. || *Lieth toward the south-west and the north-west.* The harbor was of such a shape as to be entered from the south-west and from the north-west; formed, so to speak, "of two jutting horns, which looked seaward from the south-west and the north-west, respectively."

13. *Supposing that they had obtained their purpose;* that they should be able, by the south wind, which was then blowing, to reach the port of *Phœnix*.

14. *There arose against it;* against the ship. || *A tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.* A similar wind prevails at the present day in the Mediterranean (where Paul was then sailing), blowing a sort of hurricane in all directions, from north-east to south-east. The word *Euroclydon* is compounded of two Greek words, which signify respectively *east wind* and *wave*. It conveys the idea of a vio-

ing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete.

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called *Euroclydon*.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called *Clauda*, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding

lent east wind (or wind blowing from the various points between north-east and south-east), throwing the sea into commotion, a wave-stirring east wind — a stormy north-easter, or south-easter. It was probably the same as is called by Shaw, who travelled in the East, *a Levanter*, blowing in all directions, from north-east round by north to south-east, answering very much to a tornado.

15. *When the ship was caught;* by the tempestuous wind. || *Could not bear up into the wind;* could not bear up against the wind; face it, or resist it.

16. *Running under a certain island;* sailing along by it, so as to be protected by it from the tempest. || *Clauda;* lying, according to the maps, a short distance south of the western end of Crete. || *We had much work to come by the boat;* we had much difficulty in securing the boat. The boat was alongside, or astern of the ship, and was in danger of being washed away; but by earnest efforts they secured it on board the vessel.

17. *They used helps, undergirding the ship.* To prevent the timbers and planks of a ship from loosening and giving way by the violent action of the waves, there were contrivances anciently employed for strengthening the hull of a vessel. What these *helps* were, and how they were applied, is not fully agreed. Some believe that they were cables and chains, which were passed externally

the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not

around the hull, thus binding together the planks. In more modern times, too, instances have occurred of a cable being passed several times around a vessel, to keep the planks tight. Others believe they were planks, or similar articles, used internally, for belting together the ship's timbers. || *Fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands; the sand-banks, or sand-shoals.* There was reason to fear that they should be driven on one of the sand-banks near the coast of Africa. There were two of these, which were peculiarly dangerous; called, respectively, the Larger and the Smaller. The Larger occupied five or six hundred miles in circumference. || *Strake sail; or, as is preferred by good authority, lowered the mast.* Vessels, in ancient times, had, generally, but one mast, which was so fixed as to be lowered and raised at pleasure.

18. *They lightened the ship;* by throwing her lading overboard.

19. *The tackling of the ship;* the ship's furniture. Whatever could be of no use in their disabled state, they threw overboard.

20. *Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.* Before the use of the mariner's compass in navigation, mariners depended on the sun and stars for

have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island.

directing their course. The absence of the sun and stars, consequently, was severely felt at sea. It was next to impossible, in such a storm, to determine what course the ship was sailing.

21. *After long abstinence.* In such a storm, the ship's company would have neither opportunity, nor much inclination, to take food. || *Paul—said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, &c.* Compare vs. 10—12. || *And to have gained this harm, &c.* Had they hearkened to Paul's suggestion, they would have saved themselves the harm and loss they were now suffering.

23. *There stood by me—the angel of God, &c.;* more literally, *There stood by me this night an angel of the God, &c.*

24. *Thou must be brought before Cesar.* This would be the same as saying, Thou shalt survive this danger and reach Rome. See 23: 11. 25: 11, 12. || *God hath given thee all, &c.;* out of regard to thee, God will preserve the lives of all thy fellow-voyagers. Compare vs. 42—44.

How greatly are men indebted for their blessings to God's favor towards eminently pious men! How much, too, should this thought excite pious men to a deeply serious and devout life!

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country ;

28 And sounded and found it twenty fathoms : and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast

27. *When the fourteenth night was come* ; the fourteenth of the storm (v. 33), which commenced very soon after they had left the port of Fair Havens. v. 12. || *We were driv'en up and down in Adria* ; in the Adriatic sea. This was different from what has been called the Adriatic Gulf, which corresponds to the modern Gulf of Venice. The Adriatic sea anciently included the Ionian sea, and all the sea between Greece and Italy on the north, and Africa on the south. See the map.

28. *Twenty fathoms.* The fathom was a measure of six feet. It is still used at sea in sounding.

29. *They cast four anchors out of the stern.* It was customary in ancient times, and is said to be even now among the mariners of Egypt, to drop the anchor from the stern, instead of the bows, or front of the vessel, as is now generally practised. Four anchors were also used in severe storms. || *Wished for the day* ; waited with anxiety for daylight.

30. *The shipmen were about to flee, &c.* The sailors, unwilling longer to risk their lives, and heedless of the lives of the ship's company, were aiming at once to make their escape by the boat. || *Under color as though, &c.* ; pretending that they were taking the boat in order to let down anchors at the ship's bows.

31. *Paul said — Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved* ; the sailors' skill and labors are necessary to manage the vessel ; and unless they remain, ye cannot be saved. The sailors were needed, of course, to

four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31 Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

work the vessel ; for the ship's company was to be saved, not by miracle, but by God's blessing on the appropriate means. And thus we see a connection between God's purposes, or promises (v. 24), and the use of suitable means. Paul firmly believed (v. 25) the message which had been sent to him from heaven ; but his belief in it did not lead him to overlook the usual method in which God accomplishes his designs. Had he allowed the sailors to escape, without making this remonstrance and securing the continuance of their labors, it would have been presumption in him to expect deliverance. "To make our reliance on Providence both pious and rational," says Dr. South, "we should, in every great enterprise we take in hand, prepare all things with that care, diligence, and activity, as if there was no such thing as Providence for us to depend on ; and again, when we have done all this, we should as wholly and humbly depend on it, as if we had made no preparation at all. And this is a rule of practice which will never fail or shame any." Let us never, then, lose sight of the demand on our efforts to obtain a blessing, even though God may have promised that very blessing. It would be as presumptuous to neglect the means of salvation on the ground that God has promised salvation, as it would have been for Paul to expect deliverance without the labors of the seamen, or as it would be for the husbandman to expect a harvest without sowing and cultivating.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat ; for this is for your health : for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all ; and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good

32. *Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, &c. ; and thus took away from the sailors the means of escape from the ship.*

33. *Ye have—continued fasting, having taken nothing.* The ship's company had, during fourteen days, taken no regular meal ; and they could have had but little inclination for food ; so that, comparatively speaking, they had eaten nothing ; or, as we sometimes say, they had eaten next to nothing.

34. *Meat.* This word means, in the Bible, *food, that which is to be eaten.* || *For this is for your health ;* rather, this will be for your safety. They all needed to recruit their strength, so as to be ready to avail themselves of the opportunity which would occur for getting to land. || *For there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you ;* a strong proverbial expression, not to be literally explained, but denoting that no material injury should happen to the persons of any ; that all should reach land safely. Compare 1 Kings 1 : 52.

35. *He took bread, and gave thanks to God, &c.* Paul's trust in divine providence, and his steady composure of mind, could not but inspire courage in all around him.

cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land : but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-bands, and hoised up

37. *Two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.* The Alexandrian vessels (v. 6) are said to have been very bulky, and fitted for carrying a large number of passengers. The number on board this vessel, two hundred and seventy-six, was not unusual for the ancient packets. Josephus mentions, that he took a voyage to Rome in a vessel carrying six hundred persons.

38. *They—cast out the wheat ;* the bread-stuff, and doubtless all the provisions which had been laid in for the voyage.

39. *They discovered a certain creek with a shore, &c. ;* a bay, or inlet, with a shore that seemed convenient and suitable to run the ship on.

40. *And when they had taken up the anchors they committed themselves unto the sea ;* or, more correctly, “having removed the anchors” (that is, by cutting them away), “they let them fall into the sea.” || *And loosed the rudder bands ;* so as to be able to steer the vessel. Large vessels among the ancients appear to have had two rudders. When the vessel was at anchor, the rudders were made fast. As the anchors were now cut off, and the aim was to run the ship aground, the rudders were unfastened. || *And hoised up the mainsail.* It is more

the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the

probable, that a small sail is here meant, used near the bows of the vessel.

41. *The hinder part was broken; the stern was going to pieces.*

42. *The soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, &c.* The soldiers had the prisoners in charge, and would be held responsible should they escape. As the military law among the Romans was very strict, the soldiers would rather kill the prisoners, than incur the risk of their escape.

43. *The centurion, willing to save Paul, &c.;* desiring to save Paul. The centurion had, from the first, treated Paul with much courtesy (v. 3), and seems to have felt that he was no common man. The interest which the centurion felt in Paul, made him promptly reject the soldiers' advice. Thus, in part at least, it was that God gave to Paul the lives of those who were sailing with him. v. 24.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1. *The island was called Melita.* Its modern name is *Malta*. It lies south of the island of Sicily.

2. *The barbarous people.* The

ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1 Paul, after his shipwreck, is kindly entertained of the barbarians. 5 The viper on his hand hurteth him not. 8 He healeth many diseases in the island. 11 They depart towards Rome. 17 He declareth to the Jews the cause of his coming. 24 After his preaching some were persuaded, and some believed not. 30 Yet he preacheth there two years.

AND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

original word, rendered *barbarous*, and *barbarian* (v. 4), was anciently used, not to express the idea of ferocity, but as showing that the persons spoken of belonged to a different nation from that to which the writer, or speaker, belonged. It corresponded very well to our word *foreigner*; though, perhaps, it conveyed the idea that the people thus designated were, as compared with Greeks and Romans, not advanced in civilization. The inhabitants of Malta were, at that time, Carthaginians. Some Greek and Roman families, however, were resident there, and the island was under Roman dominion. The inhabitants are said to have been noted for their civility to strangers. But, in consequence of the language which prevailed among the common people, namely, the Carthaginian, or Phenician, persons using the Greek language would, almost of course, denominate them *barbarians*.—The word *barbarian* occurs, with the same meaning, in 1 Cor. 14: 11. || *Showed us no little kindness*; a frequent way of speaking, when we mean *special kindness*. || *Because of the present rain*; of the rain which was then falling.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 In the same quarters were

3. *There came a viper out of the heat.* The viper had, of course, lain concealed among the chips, or brushwood, having become torpid by the cold weather.

4. *They said — No doubt this man is a murderer.* They perceived that he was a prisoner in the care of soldiers; and, believing that the viper would certainly inflict a fatal wound, concluded that he was a murderer, who would himself, in some way, suffer a violent death. They were influenced by the very prevalent feeling, that a murderer can scarcely fail to be detected, and to meet some signal punishment. || *Whom — vengeance suffereth not to live.* They doubtless meant that, according to their heathen notions, the goddess of vengeance — whose special province it was to bring criminals to a just retribution — would not allow him to escape unharmed, but would certainly bring him to an untimely end.

6. *They changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* They were surprised that, in such circumstances, a man could escape death, and at once concluded that Paul was more than a man — that he was in some

possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came and were healed:

10 Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

sense a god. The notions of the heathen respecting divinities were so vague, that we need not inquire *what god* they supposed him to be, or to what class of the gods he belonged. He was in some way, they thought, specially allied to superhuman beings, and was therefore endued with a nature not so vulnerable as man's.

7. *Possessions; estates.* || *The chief man of the island.* Whether more is meant than that Publius was an eminent man among the people, — for wealth, perhaps, — is uncertain. From some ancient inscriptions it would appear that the original term here translated *chief man* was used to designate the Roman prefect, or chief officer of the island. The government of Malta belonged to the Roman pretor of Sicily; and it is very probable that Publius, who was evidently, by his name, a Roman, was employed by him as a prefect of Malta.

10. *Who also honored us with many honors;* bestowed on us many honorable attentions.

11. *In a ship of Alexandria — whose sign was Castor and Pollux.* According to the Roman mythology, Castor and Pollux were twin sons of

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

Jupiter, and were patrons of mariners. An image of these two divinities was attached to this vessel, either for ornament, or for securing their protection; perhaps for both purposes. Anciently, the stern of a vessel was adorned with an image of the divinity to whose protection it was committed; and the bows with an image of the person, or object, whose name the vessel bore. In the case here mentioned, probably, as was sometimes practised, the vessel was named after the divinities who were regarded as its patron gods, Castor and Pollux.

12. *Landing at Syracuse*; a celebrated city on the southern coast of Sicily, with a capacious harbor.

13. *From thence we fetched a compass*; that is, *we took a circuitous course*. The wind was unsteady; and they proceeded in their voyage by tacking and frequently shifting their course. || *And came to Rhegium*; a city on the coast of Italy, near the south-west extremity. || *To Puteoli*; a maritime town on the south-west coast of Italy, directly on the apostle's way to Rome. It was a favorite place of resort for the Romans, on account of mineral waters and hot baths in the vicinity.

14. *Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days*. It is supposed that seven days were particularly mentioned, in order that a sabbath might occur during the apostle's stay, and thus all the Christians be favored with an opportunity to hear him preach. Perhaps he arrived at Puteoli the day after the sabbath; and thus the number of seven days, to bring around another sabbath, would naturally be stated. The centurion, doubtless, kindly acceded to the request.

15. *When the brethren heard of us*;

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii-Forum, and

that is, the Christians in the city of Rome. There was frequent communication between Puteoli and Rome; and the Christians in that city heard of Paul, either by letter or by message. There had been a Christian church for some years in Rome. Respecting its origin, there is no authentic information. As that city was a place of so frequent resort from all parts of the world, a knowledge of the gospel could not fail to be carried thither very soon after the memorable day of Pentecost. Indeed, it is not unlikely that some of the Roman Jews who were converted in Jerusalem on that occasion (2: 10), carried the gospel to Rome, and there set up the Christian interest. Though Paul had never yet been in that city, he was well known to the church there; for his Epistle to the Romans was written before he had visited the city (Rom. 1: 10—15); probably two or three years before; and from the 16th chapter of that epistle it is evident, that he was acquainted with many members of the Roman church. Such acquaintances he could easily form, since he was travelling very extensively, and would meet with inhabitants of Rome in various parts, who were abroad for business and other purposes. || *They came to meet us as far as Appii-Forum*; a small town, about fifty miles distant from Rome. It received this name on account of its being situated on the *Appian Way*, a celebrated paved road leading from Rome to the city of Brundusium, a distance of three hundred and fifty miles. This road was called, by way of eminence, *the queen of roads*. It was made so strong, and the stones were so well cemented together, that it remained entire for many hundred years. Some parts of it are still to

The Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him.

be seen in the neighborhood of Naples. || *The Three Taverns*; another small place, thirty-three miles from Rome; so called from its being a common stopping-place for travellers to refresh themselves. The Christians in Rome, hearing of Paul's approach, went out to meet him, in testimony of their high respect for him. They went in two companies; one met him at Appii-Forum, and the other at The Three Taverns, a place considerably nearer the city. || *He thanked God, and took courage.* The sight of Christian brethren was highly encouraging to him. He was led to anticipate opportunities for usefulness in the city, notwithstanding his being a prisoner; and the respectful attentions of the brethren to one in his circumstances, were peculiarly cheering.—To friends in distress, marks of respect and kindness are worth far more than they cost. The Christian religion by no means interdicts suitable tokens of regard; on the contrary, the intimate union between Christian hearts, and the freedom from jealousy and envy which the gospel enjoins, prompts sentiments of respect for those whom the Saviour has made distinguished instruments of usefulness.

16. *The centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; to the commander of the emperor's body-guard.* He is more properly called, according to the original term, *prefect of the camp*, or, of the barracks of the imperial guard. To his custody, the law required that all persons sent to Rome as prisoners should be committed. || *But Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, &c.* Special favor was shown to Paul. Prisoners who

17 And it came to pass, that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. And when they were come together, he said unto them, *Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into*

had been sent to Rome were generally placed in the camp, or barracks, of the emperor's guards. But Paul was permitted to dwell in a house by himself (v. 30); guarded, however, as being in military custody, by a soldier to whose person he was confined by a chain. v. 20. The letter of Festus (25: 26), and the favorable representations of the centurion Julius (27: 1), who had throughout shown a high regard for him (27: 3, 43), doubtless secured this kind treatment. His examinations before Festus (25: 6—8) and Agrippa (26: 31), though they did not procure him deserved release, were yet productive of good effects in securing him kind treatment on his arrival at Rome.

17. *Paul called the chief of the Jews together; the leading men among the Jews of Rome.* There was a large Jewish population in that city. Paul sought to prevent them from becoming unreasonably prejudiced against him, and wished therefore to give the principal men among them a true statement of his case, that, if possible, there might be no impediment to his usefulness arising from the fact of his having been sent to Rome as a prisoner. || *I have committed nothing against the people; I have committed no crime against the Jews.* || *Yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem, &c.* Paul was first apprehended by the Jews (21: 27), and came into the care of the Romans by the act of a Roman officer (21: 32, 33), who rescued him from the fury of his Jewish assailants. Subsequently to that act, the Jews consented to his being held a prisoner by the Roman power; nor would they have allowed of his being set at

the hands of the Romans:

18 Who when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Cesar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of.

liberty, unless in order that they themselves should take his case into their own management. Being thus in the power of the Romans, he was conveyed from Jerusalem to Cesarea to be tried before the Roman governor. The Jews, then, may properly be said to have delivered Paul over to the Romans, and to have been instrumental in his being carried from Jerusalem, since they originated the proceedings which led to this event.

18. *Who—would have let me go, &c.*; would have set me at liberty. Compare 24: 22, 23, 26, 27. 25: 25. 26: 31, 32. In all the examinations which the apostle underwent, before Roman officers and king Agrippa, it became evident that there was no just ground of complaint against him, and that he ought to have been set at liberty.

19. *But when the Jews spake against it.* The Jews were bent on Paul's destruction. They would not hearken to any proposals for his release. Compare 24: 27. 25: 9. || *I was constrained to appeal unto Cesar.* Paul knew the Jews' determined hostility against him; and rather than place himself in their power, and in order to transfer the cause to a tribunal where their interference would not be felt, as it had been felt by both Felix and Festus, he appealed to the emperor himself. There was no other course that promised him just treatment. || *Not that I had aught to accuse my nation of;* not that I meant to lay any charges against my countrymen. Paul's design was, solely, to secure a just investigation of his own case, and not to appear as an accuser. Though his countrymen had treated him wrongfully, yet he

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came

cherished no malice towards them, and wished not to excite Roman authority against them. He wished, too, that the Roman Jews should not suspect him of unduly magnifying the ill-treatment which he had received.

20. *For this cause, therefore, have I called for you, &c.* As I am brought to Rome a prisoner, I have sent for you that I might explain to you the grounds on which I have been thus treated. || *For the hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain.* The coming of the Messiah, who had been promised to the forefathers of the nation, was the great object of hope to the Jews. Paul had incurred the ill-will of his countrymen, and been made a prisoner, in consequence of his believing in Jesus as the Messiah, and of his so zealously and successfully advocating the claims of Jesus to be thus regarded. The apostle, on this occasion, doubtless added force to his declaration by raising his arm and exposing to the view of the company the chain by which he was bound to the Roman soldier. v. 16.

21. *We neither received letters, &c.* The preceding remarks of Paul were in his own defence, as he represented himself to have been an injured, ill-treated man. The Jews with whom he had this interview, politely assured him that they had, neither by letters from Judea, nor by visiting brethren, received any intelligence of misconduct alleged against him. They knew that Paul was a Christian; but they appear, on this occasion, to have been kindly disposed, and not to have had reference to his opinions, but to reports about his conduct. As he had disclaimed any unkind

showed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee, what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging: to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not

among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

intentions towards the nation, so they assured him that no intelligence had reached them of misconduct on his part, which would prejudice them against him.

22. *But we desire to hear of thee, &c.* As he was a distinguished Christian, they were desirous to learn his views respecting the Christian opinions and practices. The candor and confidence in him which they professed, could not but have been gratifying to the apostle. They had, doubtless, been pleasantly affected by his remarks to them; and were willing to hear from him a statement of his opinions concerning the Messiah, and the followers of Jesus. || *Concerning this sect;* the sect of Christians. Compare 24:5. See, also, 24:14, in which verse the word translated *heresy* is the same as in the fifth verse of that chapter is properly translated *sect*. These Jews, in conversing with Paul, designated the followers of Jesus in the way which seems to have been customary with their countrymen. Probably, some degree of contempt was associated with the word, as commonly used.

23. *He expounded and testified the kingdom of God;* he made full explanations, and gave ample testimony, respecting the Christian religion. The *kingdom of God* is equivalent to

the *Christian religion*, because the phrase means *the Messiah's reign*. This reign consists, properly, in establishing his religion, and bringing men under its power; so that, by their becoming righteous, it might be truly said, God is their king. See on 19:8. || *Concerning Jesus;* concerning the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah. || *Out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.* By referring to the writings of Moses and the prophets, he showed the real character of the Messiah, and the signs by which he should be distinguished. These instructions of the Old Testament, pertaining to the Messiah, were all applicable to Jesus of Nazareth; and thus he was proved to be the promised Messiah. Compare Luke 24:44.

25. *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet.* See Is. 6:9, 10.

26. *Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand;* ye shall have ample instruction, but ye will not understand. || *Seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive;* the truth shall be clearly set before you, but ye will not perceive it.

27. *Lest they should see, &c.;* so as to prevent themselves from seeing, and hearing, and understanding, and from being converted and healed. The idea conveyed by the prophet in the language here quoted is, that

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and

the people would have ample information presented to them, but would not favorably receive it: they would act as if they were determined not to see, and not to hear, and not to be converted to righteousness. Consequently, they would not be healed; that is, delivered from their spiritual maladies, and restored to happiness. — This seemed to be verified in the case of some, at least, of those to whom Paul was then communicating the gospel, as in the case of those who lived in Isaiah's time; so that what the prophet had declared of their fathers, would be found true of themselves. They would not embrace the gospel; and therefore they deprived themselves of its blessings. Compare 13: 40, 41.

28. *The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles.* Compare 13: 46, 47. 18: 6. || *They will hear it.* How similar is the apostle's thought to that which had long before been expressed by the Lord Jesus, to the chief priests and Pharisees (Matt. 21: 43) — “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

30. *Paul dwelt two whole years, &c.* He was detained a prisoner in Rome two years. He had also been detained in Cesarea by Felix two years. 24: 27. If to these we add the minor spaces of time passed in Cesarea under Festus, and occupied in going to Rome, there will be a period of nearly five years, during which Paul was a prisoner.

31. *Preaching — and teaching.* Besides his preaching and teaching with his voice, he also made use of his pen. The two years which he spent at Rome were diligently occupied to the advantage of the Christian religion. Several of his epistles preserved in the New Testament, were

had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of

written during his detention in this city. And we may believe, that by this providential arrangement the apostle Paul was made more useful to the church, in all subsequent ages, than if he had always enjoyed his liberty, and had been travelling from place to place. Thus God makes the wrath of man to praise him. The history of the Acts of the Apostles has given us frequent occasion for such a remark; and in every succeeding age of the church there have been many and striking evidences, that God overrules for good the evil designs of men who oppose the gospel. How vain it is to resist, or attempt to injure, the cause which has the Almighty for its defender! How wise, on the contrary, to identify ourselves with that cause, and become voluntarily subservient to the purposes of Him whose counsel shall stand, and whose providence is steadily, however to human view slowly, tending to a glorious consummation, and is, in its progress, making even opposition available to good! Thus it was in the case of Paul. The efforts to cut short his activity were the occasion of God's more signally employing him, as an instrument of righteousness and salvation to countless multitudes of men. Not to man, but to the only wise God be the glory!

As is stated in the 30th verse, the apostle remained a prisoner in Rome two years. At the end of this time — about the year of our Lord 62, or 63; some chronologers say 65 — he was set at liberty; his prosecutors, as is generally supposed, not appearing against him, or, if they did, there being evidently not a particle of justice in their accusation. It appears, too, from Phil. 1: 13. 4: 22, that some persons connected with Nero's family had become Christians;

God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus

perhaps their interest with the emperor had influence in procuring the apostle's liberation.

Of the remaining brief portion of the apostle's life, there is no certain historical account. There are traditions, however, from early times, which represent him as having travelled extensively, and having visited Spain and Britain. Little reliance can be placed on such traditions, when they descend to particulars. It is the generally received opinion, that, after being set at liberty, he devoted himself anew to the propagation of the gospel, and afterwards returned to Rome; that here he was arrested by order of the emperor Nero, who condemned him to be beheaded at a place called Aquæ Salviæ, or, the Salvian Waters, three miles from Rome, about

Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

the year of our Lord 65, or, as some say,⁶⁷; and, according to Chrysostom, at the age of sixty-eight years. He met his death with the composure and firmness which might have been expected in a man whose views of religious truth were so clear, whose piety was so sincere and fervent, and who, in the near prospect of death, surveying his past Christian course, and anticipating the fulfilment of his Saviour's promises, had intelligently and calmly said, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 Tim. 4: 6—8.

APPENDIX I.

As so large a portion of the Acts of the Apostles is devoted to events in which Paul was personally concerned, it will be interesting, probably, to the readers of this volume, to see at one glance, as it were, those events in their consecutive order. I have, therefore, selected from Dr. Robinson's very valuable edition of Calmet's Bible Dictionary, the following abstract of the chief events in the life of the apostle Paul, with the dates to which they may be assigned :—

“ The different chronologies of Hug, De Wette, Kuinoel, and Lardner, are here presented side by side; and thus the table, while it shows the *general* agreement of chronologers, shows also that it is impossible to arrive at *entire* certainty in this respect; or, indeed, any nearer than to assign the principal dates to an interval of two or three years, within which the events may be regarded as having certainly taken place.

	Hug.	De Wette.	Kuinoel.	Lardner.
Paul's conversion, Acts ix. (21st year of Tiberius, Hug.).....	A.	D.	36.....38.....40.....	36
He goes into Arabia, and returns to Damascus (Gal. i. 17); at the end of three years in all, he escapes from Damascus, and goes to Jerusalem. Acts ix. 23, &c.....			39.....	43.....39
From Jerusalem Paul goes to Cilicia and Syria. Acts ix. 30. Gal. i. 21. From Antioch he is sent with Barnabas to Jerusalem, to carry alms. Acts xi. 30.....			45.....	44.....44
The first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch, continued about two years (Acts xiii. xiv.), commencing.....			45.....	45
After spending several years in Antioch (Acts xiv. 28), Paul and Barnabas are sent a second time to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles respecting circumcision, &c. Acts xv. 2.....			53.....52.....52.....	50
The Jews expelled from Rome, A. D. 52—54; Paul, on his second missionary journey (Acts xv. 40), after passing through Asia Minor to Europe, finds Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. Acts xviii. 2.....			54.....54.....	51
Paul remains eighteen months in Corinth. Acts xviii. 11. After being				

Hug. De Wette. Kuinoel. Lardner.

brought before Gallio, he departs for Jerusalem the fourth time, and then goes to Antioch. Acts xviii. 22. (Kuinoel supposes him to be imprisoned at Jerusalem.)	56.....56.....57.....
The apostle winters at Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12, Hug), and then goes to Ephesus. Acts xix. 2.....	57.....58.....53
After a residence of two years or more at Ephesus, Paul departs for Macedonia.....	59.....59.....56
After wintering in Achaia [Acts xx. 2, 3], Paul goes the fifth time to Jerusalem, where he is imprisoned. Acts xx. xxi.....	60.....60.....58
The apostle remains two years in prison at Cesarea, and is then sent to Rome, where he arrives in the spring, after wintering in Malta. Acts xxiv. 27, xxv.—xxviii.....	63.....63.....60.....61
The history in Acts concludes, and Paul is supposed to have been set at liberty.....	65.....65.....62.....63"

APPENDIX III.

PRONOUNCING VOCABULARY

OF

NAMES OF PERSONS AND PLACES OCCURRING IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND IN THESE NOTES.

I have thought it best to insert in this Vocabulary only those names which would be likely to occasion difficulty in regard to the right mode of pronunciation.

This mark (') denotes the place of the accent, and also divides syllables. A due regard to the accented syllable will generally secure a correct pronunciation of the whole word. Long syllables and short ones are denoted by the usual marks (—) (—).

Ab-i-lé'ne	A-di-a-bé'ne	Am-phi-p'o-lis
A-cel'da-ma	A'dri-a	An-tí'ō-chus
A-chá'ia	Ad-ra-my'ti-um	E-píph'a-né's
A-ká'ya	Al-phé'us	—kus
		An-tip'a-ter

An-tip'a-tris	Dăm'ă-ris	Phrýg'i-a
Ap'pí-i-Fō-rum	Der'be	Frij---
Aq'uī-lă, or A-quīl'ă	Di-ă'na	Prōch'ō-rus
Ăk'wē-lă, or A-kwīl'ă	E-ge'ān	Prok'---
Ar-che-la'us	—je—	Ptōl'ē-my
—ke—	El'y-mas	Tōl—
A-ré-ōp'a-gus	Ē'nē-as	Ptōl-ē-mā'is
A-re-ōp'a-gite	Ep-i-cu-rē'an	Tōl—
—jite	E-să'ias	Pū-tē-ō'li, or Pū-tē'ō-li
Ar'e-tas	E-ză'yas	Rhē'gī-um
A-thē'ne	Eu-roc'ly-don	—jī—
Au-ra-nī'tis	Eu'ty-chus	Rhōdes
Bat-a-nē'a	—kus	Sad'dū-cēēs
Ber-nī'ce	Eu-phrā'tēs	Sa'ide
Bi-thy'nī-a	Gā'ius	a like a in far
Ca'ia-phas	—yus	Sal-mō'ne
Kā-ya—	Ga-mă'li-el	Sal-o-ni'ki
Ca-lig'u-la	I-o'nī-a	—ne'kē
Cal-lim'a-chus	La-sē'a	Sam-o-thrā'cī-a
Can'da-ce	Le-chæ'um	Sap-phi'ra
Cen'chre-a	—kē—	Sa'ron
—kre—	Lib'er-tīnes	Scē'va
Ces-a-rē'a	—tīns	Sē—
Chal'cis	Ly-cā'on	Se-bă's'te
Kal—	Lýc-a-ō'ni-a	Sōp'ā-ter
Chal-dē'ans	Man'ă-en	Sōs'thē-nēs
Kal—	Mel'i-ta	Sue-tō'ni-us
Char'ran	Mer'o-ē	Swe—
Kar—	Mit-y-lē'ne	Sýr'chem
Chi'os	Mnā'son	—kem
Ki—	Nā—	Sýr'a-cūse
Chi'ún	Ne-ap'o-lis	Thes-sa-lō-nī'ca
Ki—	Ni-că'nor	Thes-sa-lō-nī'ans
Chrý-sop'o-lis	Ni'ger	Ti-mō'thē-us
Chrýs'os-tom	—jer	Thy-a-tī'ra
Cni'dus	Pat'ă-ra	Trach-o-nī'tis
Ni—	Pha'raōh	Trak—
Cō'os	Fā'rō	Tro-gy'l/li-um
Cōr'inth	Phe-nī'ce	—jīl—
Cren'i-dēs		Tých'i-cus
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BARON STOW,
DANIEL SHARP,
R. H. NEALE,
J. W. PARKER.

[From R. E. Pattison, D. D., President of Waterville College.]

I know not that I have ever read so much commentary with so few occasions to dissent from the views of the author; and though he has fewer devotional and practical remarks than Dr. Scott, yet they are not inferior to his, either in spirit or effect. Taking every thing into consideration, I should sooner recommend the Notes to that class of persons for whom they were designed, than any other with which I am acquainted.

R. E. PATTISON.

Waterville College, July, 1838.

[From Rev. S. Chapin, D. D., Pres. of Columbia College, Washington, D. C.]

His explanations in the Introduction are pertinent and valuable ; his notes preserve a just medium between the diffuse and the concise. One excellence of Professor Ripley is, that he helps the reader where he needs help, and when he does not, he lets him go alone. On plain texts, his notes are not obtruded ; but on the obscure, they are sound and satisfactory. In a word, I view the work as possessed of much merit, and well adapted to promote biblical knowledge and the cause of religion, and trust that, in the efforts made to give it a wider circulation, a liberal encouragement will be extended by the Christian community.

S. CHAPIN.

College Hill, D. C., August 8, 1838.

[From Rev. Luther Crawford, Sec. Am. Bap. Home Miss. Society, N. York.]

It affords me pleasure to say, that it is the only work of the kind within my acquaintance, that may be placed, with perfect safety, in the hands of the inexperienced, without some caution to be on their guard. Professor R. has, in my view, adopted correct principles of interpretation, and has not been pledged to the support of any theological system, which has required him, ever and anon, to suspend his principles to save his theory. I cannot but regard this as the *safest* and *most unexceptionable* work there is to be found of the kind, and should rejoice to hear of its extensive circulation through all our families and Sabbath schools.

New York, August 6, 1838.

LUTHER CRAWFORD.

[From Rev. J. S. Bacon, Lynn, Mass.]

It is, undoubtedly, one of the most valuable helps, which a prolific press is, at the present day, affording to those who are desirous of becoming better acquainted with the Word of God. It is designed, chiefly, to aid teachers of Sabbath schools and Bible classes in family instruction, and is, in my opinion, extremely well adapted to its purpose. The notes are almost wholly explanatory ; they are brief, to the point, and are for the most part confined to those passages which, to the young and inexperienced especially, really need some explanation. There are no labored discussions, no redundancy of argument or practical observations — a fault so common among commentaries. The author has brought his knowledge and skill in interpretation to bear, in the most simple and effective way, upon the elucidation of the text, with here and there only a few practical remarks, such as are calculated rather to guide the mind, than to fill it up with profitable reflections. The teacher or scholar will find in this work a greater number of just such questions as he would desire to ask, intelligibly and satisfactorily answered, than in any other. I regard it as a very simple, safe, and judicious commentary, and should be happy to see it in every family, and in the hand of every Sabbath school teacher, and scholar of suitable age, in the land.

Lynn, July 7, 1838.

J. S. BACON.

[From Rev. R. Turnbull, Pastor of the South Baptist Church, Hartford, Conn.]

Having introduced Professor Ripley's Notes into my Bible class about six months ago, I have had a fair opportunity of becoming acquainted with the merits of the work. I can unhesitatingly say, that it is almost every thing I could wish as a class-book. The value of

the notes consists chiefly in their *brevity, judiciousness, and simplicity*. The difficult passages are satisfactorily discussed, while those of a plainer and more intelligible nature are passed over with brief notices. Professor Ripley's style is plain and chaste,—not loaded with redundancies, nor bristling with epithets and antitheses. His spirit is eminently Christian, or, in other words, it is modest, humble, and devout. His topics for practical reflection, which he merely indicates, are well chosen and happily expressed. I have much pleasure in recommending the work, as the best of its kind, for a text-book in Bible classes and Sabbath schools.

ROBERT TURNBULL.

Hartford, July 17, 1838.

[From Rev. N. W. Williams, Beverly, Mass.]

It gives me pleasure to add my testimony to that of others in favor of the work. It is, in my opinion, well adapted to the design which it professes to have in view. I hope it will find a place among all our Sabbath school teachers, and in families generally, as a work which, if it aim not at novelty of ideas, may be relied on as explaining the text in a clear and comprehensive manner.

Beverly, July 30, 1838.

N. W. WILLIAMS.

[From Dr. J. S. Baker and Rev. Thomas Hume.]

We have carefully examined Ripley's Notes on the Gospels, and feel no hesitation in saying, that they answer the ends for which they were designed. To teachers of Sabbath schools and Bible classes, heads of families, and others who have not leisure or disposition to wade through more extended commentaries, this work will prove an invaluable acquisition. Some may possibly object to the brevity of the notes: in our estimation, they are sufficiently extensive for all ordinary purposes. Were the work more voluminous, it would be less read, and consequently less useful. This is an important consideration, and it should be allowed due weight. The style of the work merits particular commendation. While plain and unostentatious, it is chaste and perspicuous. The faithfulness of the author, in his notes on those passages of Scripture which have reference to the subject of baptism, should commend the work to every member of our denomination. We trust that the period is not far distant, when a copy of it will be found in every Baptist family in the United States.

JOSEPH S. BAKER,
THOMAS HUME.

Norfolk, Vir., August 11, 1838.

[From Rev. J. A. Warne, Editor of the Comprehensive Commentary.]

His criticisms are just, judicious, and unostentatious; and often the results of much research are given in such a shape, that none but those accustomed to labors of this nature would suspect that they had cost the author any trouble. He has employed his varied and extensive acquirements "in making difficult things easy, and complicated ones plain, to the common people." It may not seem proper to institute comparisons between Ripley and Barnes; and yet I will just say, that Professor Ripley is, in my judgment, by far the safer, the more modest, and the less ostentatious guide; and I cannot but wish he were adopted *universally*, in place of Barnes, in our Sabbath schools.

JOSEPH A. WARNE.

Philadelphia, August 15, 1838.

[From Rev. N. Kendrick, D. D., Prof. in the Hamilton Lit. and Theol. Institution.]

Having examined Professor Ripley's Notes on the Gospels, I take pleasure in saying, I think them superior, for the use of Sabbath schools, to any exposition I have seen of this part of the divine Word.

The correctness of sentiment which they inculcate — the judgment with which the most important points of the passages are selected for explanation — the perspicuity and precision with which these are treated — the judicious references to ancient usages, which throw light on difficult texts — their adaptation to awaken in youth an interest for the study of the sacred Scriptures, and to aid their inquiries after divine truth — give them a decided claim upon the patronage of the Christian community. The calls for the work must be numerous wherever its character is known, and the Sabbath school system prevails. I hope an ample supply will be provided.

NATHANIEL KENDRICK.

Hamilton Lit. and Theol. Sem., Nov. 12, 1838.

[From Rev. A. Perkins, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Hamilton, N. Y.]

I very fully concur in the sentiments expressed above, by Dr. Kendrick, and hope that the Notes of Professor Ripley will soon receive as wide a circulation as their great excellence demands.

Hamilton, N. Y.

A. PERKINS.

[From Rev. B. T. Welch, D. D., Pastor of Pearl Street Church, Albany, N. Y.]

I have looked through the volumes with very great pleasure. The notes, though brief, contain much information of an important character to the student of the Bible, particularly the lucid illustration of the text from the manners and customs of the East. Their brevity, indeed, may be regarded as one of their peculiar excellences: rarely have I seen so large an amount of useful and important matter comprised within so narrow limits. They are, in my judgment, admirably adapted to the object for which they were written; and to the Sunday school teacher an invaluable aid, when known and appreciated, they must soon be regarded as indispensable in schools and Bible classes. Respectfully yours, &c.

B. T. WELCH.

Albany, 7th November, 1838.

[From Rev. Jeremiah Chaplin, D. D., late President of Waterville College.]

The authors of the passages on which he comments are those of a sound, discriminating mind, are evidently the result of much reading and reflection, and presented in a style distinguished by its neatness and perspicuity. He seems, besides, to have hit on the proper medium between that conciseness which leaves the mind of the reader unsatisfied, and that prolixity which exhausts his patience and loads his memory with useless lumber. This is a rare excellence in writings of any kind, and especially in those whose object is to illustrate the Word of God.

JEREMIAH CHAPLIN.

[From the Christian Review, by the late Prof. J. D. Knowles.]

Professor Ripley has given us a specimen of the right kind of commentary; the notes are more strictly explanatory than those of Mr. Barnes; they occupy a smaller space; the style, though less pointed and vivacious, exhibits more sobriety; the principles of interpretation are more cautiously applied; and the explanations, particularly on the subject of baptism, are more correct.

[From the Minutes of the New Hampshire State Convention.]

Your committee recommend to the special notice of their brethren "Ripley's Notes on the Gospels," which should find a place in every Sabbath school and family.

[From the Biblical Repository.]

There are three things in these Notes which have given us much satisfaction; first, the kind and catholic spirit every where manifest — second, the labor is bestowed upon the really difficult texts — third, the practical reflections are few and to the point.

[From Zion's Advocate, Portland.]

They seem to us to be characterized by great correctness of sentiment, so that they are a very safe guide to the Sabbath school teacher. We are much pleased, also, with the topics of reflection, which are appended to each chapter. We prefer this method of merely suggesting such topics, to that adopted by authors of similar works, of dwelling somewhat at length upon them. These Notes breathe throughout the spirit of fervent piety; and he who reads them will be improved in piety as well as in knowledge. We cordially recommend this work to all engaged in Sabbath school or Bible class instruction, and to heads of families.

[From the Boston Recorder.]

The notes are brief, limited to passages that require explanation, and to the point. Important topics of reflection are often suggested but not systematically, to aid the mind of the reader or teacher in its own labors, rather than to render those labors unnecessary.

[From the New Hampshire Baptist Register.]

Commentaries on the Bible are become so numerous, and are found so frequently defective, that we sit down to read a new production of this kind with diminished interest. Ample aid is commonly administered, when it is *not required*, but when it *is*, the reader is left to make of his perplexity the best he can. These remarks, however, are by no means applicable to Professor Ripley's Notes on the Gospels. Where light is necessary, it is given; where it would be superfluous, it is withheld. In short, these notes universally partake of the learning, the caution, the modesty, and the independence for which their author is known. The mechanical department of the work is well executed. We cordially recommend the Notes to conductors of Bible classes, and to teachers of Sabbath schools. The clergyman, too, will find them well worthy of a place in his library. The price is reasonable, and every *Baptist* family ought to possess them.

[From the Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman.]

On former occasions we have introduced these volumes to our readers, and have spoken of them in terms of decided commendation. We will just add, that no religious family nor Sunday school teacher should be without a copy of these Notes.

[From the Christian Watchman.]

This work, which we have been anticipating with no ordinary degree of interest, *more than meets our expectation*. The notes are chiefly explanatory, and are to the point. They are written in a style which is both chaste and perspicuous. The style of publication is highly finished, and adds much to the value of the work.

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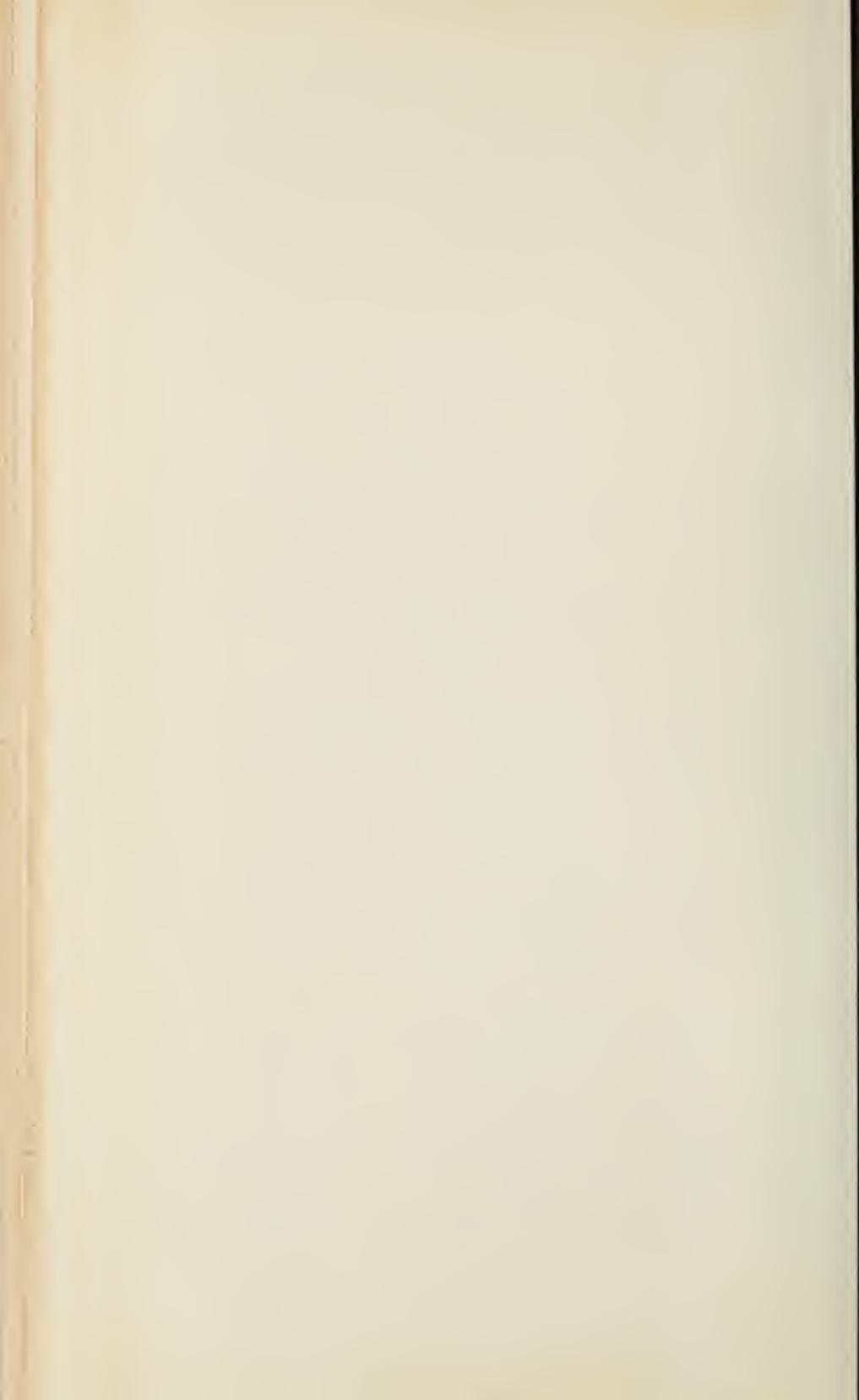
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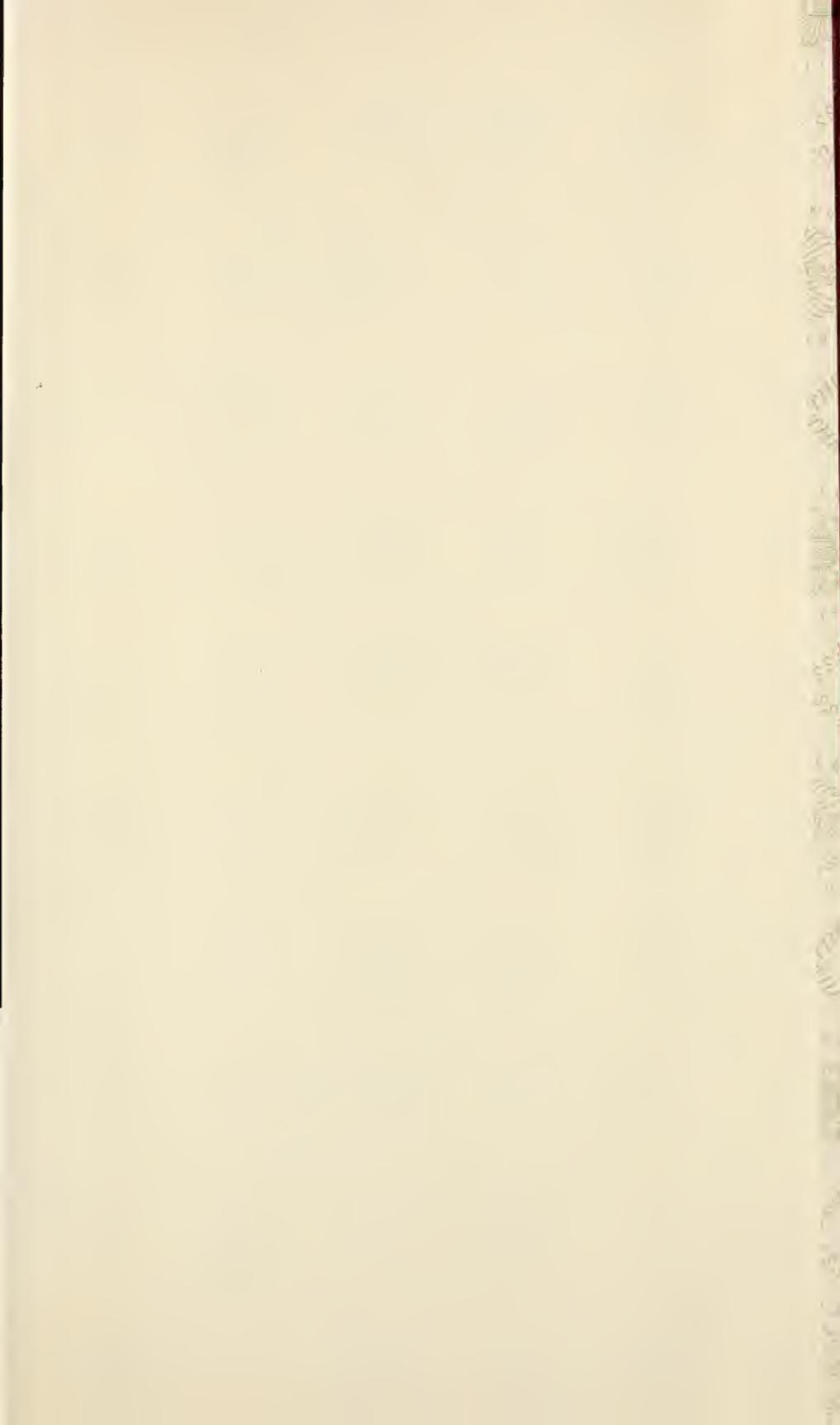
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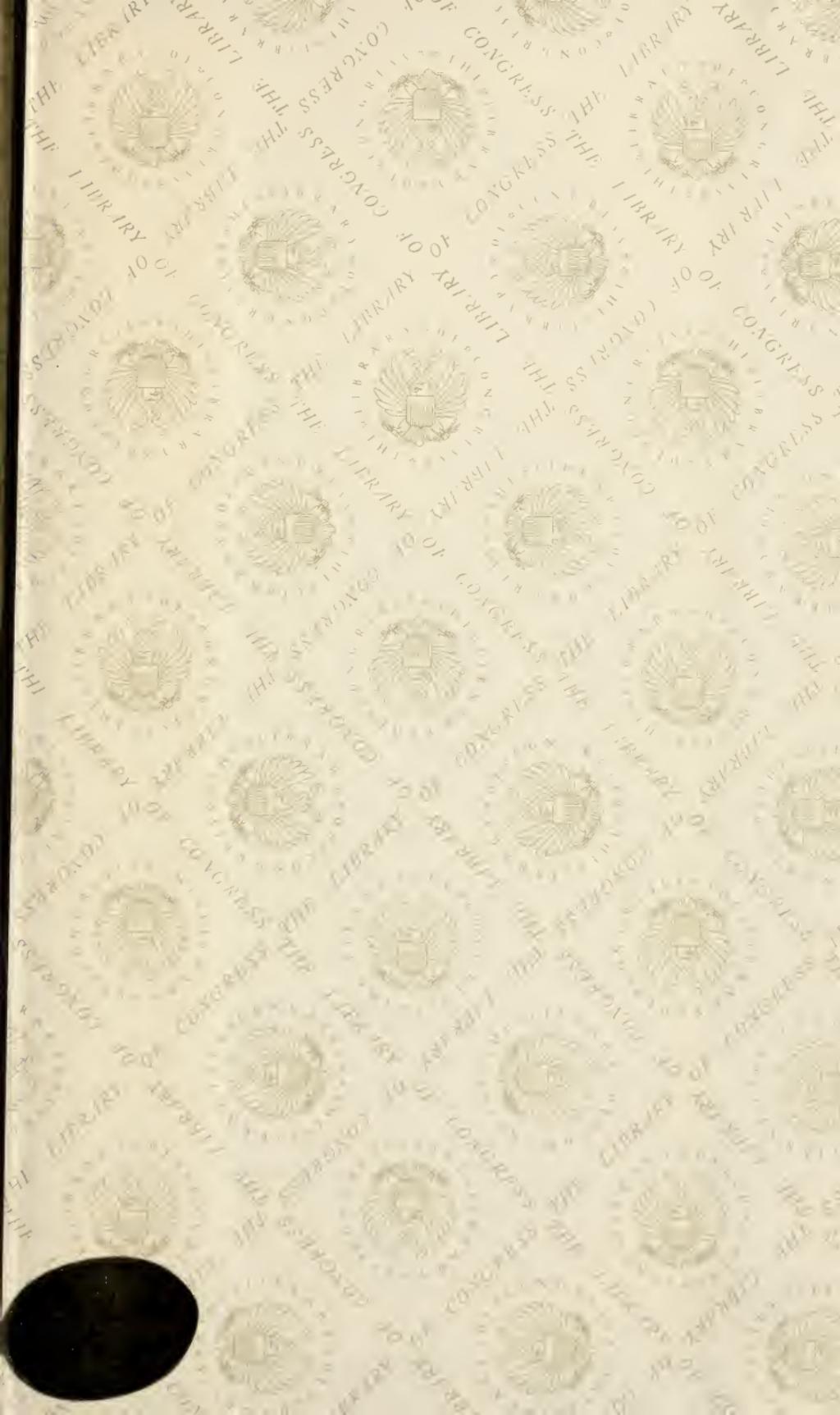




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